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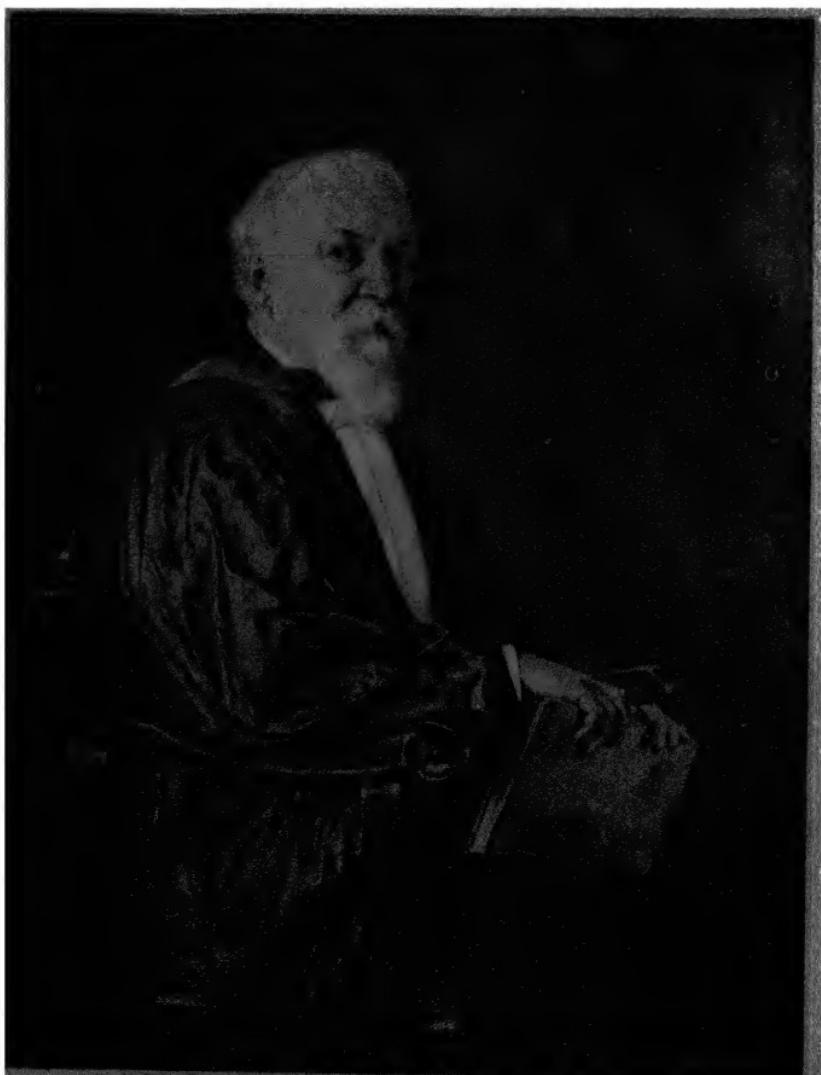
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D R A M A S

BY

ROBERT BROWNING



Robert Browning
Engraved from a sketch by himself
for the first edition of "Sordello".
London: Published for the Author by J. M. Dent & Sons.

DRAMAS
BY
ROBERT BROWNING

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

OSCAR BROWNING, M.A.

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UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

POEMS

BY ROBERT BROWNING

AND

POEMS

BY ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

CONTENTS

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| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| INTRODUCTION | ix |
| PARACELSIUS | 9 |
| PIPPA PASSES. A DRAMA | 111 |
| KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. A TRAGEDY | 153 |
| COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY. A PLAY | 199 |
| A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON. A TRAGEDY | 251 |
| THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES. A TRAGEDY | 289 |
| LUBIA. A TRAGEDY | 337 |
| A SOUL'S TRAGEDY | 333 |
| SRAFFORD. AN HISTORICAL TRAGEDY | 409 |

INTRODUCTION.

ROBERT BROWNING

BY

OSCAR BROWNING.

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ROBERT BROWNING was born at Hanover Cottage, Southampton Street, Camberwell, on May 7, 1812. The Brownings are one of the oldest families in England; their name first appears as that of coiners to the Saxon kings. The principal branch of the family was settled in Gloucestershire, where it possessed many manors. In 1399 John Browning, Sheriff of Gloucester, married Elianor, or Alianor, daughter and co-heiress of Sir Thomas Fitz-Nicholl, Knight. By this marriage the Brownings became possessed of the Manor of Cowley, or Coaly, in the Cotswold Hills near Dursley, which remained for more than three hundred years their principal place of residence. The chancel is paved with their coat-of-arms. They bore, in its simplest form, a shield barry wavy of six argent and azure, representing the waters of the sea, the arms, according to the old heraldic writers, given to Reuben—"unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." Browning used to say that these arms were given by Henry V. to the captain of the ship *Holy Ghost*, who took him over to France before the battle of Agincourt. But they are certainly much older than Henry V. Robert Browning himself for some reason did not use these arms, but the coat of the Bruning family, an ancient Catholic stock settled in Hampshire and Wiltshire. Their blazon is gules, two beadlets wavy, one or, the other argent, which used to be seen on the uniform of the gondoliers

of the Palazzo Rezzonico at Venice. Some time in the fifteenth century a branch of the Cowley Brownings moved into Dorsetshire, and became possessed of the Manor of Melbury Abbas. The church at Melbury does, or did, contain two canopied tombs, covered with coats-of-arms, with effigies of the departed. One of these commemorated John, and the other William, Browning, two brothers. The daughter and heiress of William Browning married a Strangways, the ancestor of the present Earls of Ilchester. The new heir not only appropriated the estate, but even the tomb of his wife's family, and it is said in the county history that on one of the monuments the inscription bears only the name of Strangways. Robert Browning undoubtedly came from Dorsetshire, and he may have been descended from the Brownings of Melbury. In that case he would have been a distant cousin of the present writer, who is a lineal descendant of the Brownings of Cowley. We often used to talk over the matter together in the long years of our friendship, but at that time could not establish any connection. But his derivation from this knightly family is at present a matter of conjecture. So far as we know, the earliest direct ancestor of the poet recorded is Robert Browning, who during the first half of the eighteenth century was butler to Sir John Bankes of Corfe Castle. He was undoubtedly the poet's great-great-grandfather. It is said that Robert Browning was fond of speculating whether Micaiah Browning, who, in his ship, the *Mountjoy*, broke the boom across the Foyle at the siege of Londonderry, was amongst his ancestors. I have made diligent search, and have found no trace of Micaiah in any documents which would determine his connection with any particular branch of the Browning clan.

The poet's father was a very remarkable man. He seems from an early period to have discovered not only the strength of his son's genius, but the line of development which it was likely to follow. He undoubtedly by his wise conduct contributed largely to his son's success. He may therefore be classed with Giovanni Sanzio, the father of Raffaelle; Leopold Mozart, the father of Wolfgang; and Frau Aja, the mother of Goethe. He was for nearly fifty years a clerk in the Consols Dividend Room at the Bank of England, and his salary never

exceeded £275 a year. This will account perhaps for his not having sent Robert to a public school, but it is much to his credit that he did not insist upon his earning his own living, and left him time for unrestrained literary work, which did not for many years produce a return. He had a library of six thousand books, and was passionately fond of reading. He also had a remarkable power of versifying. The "Pied Piper of Hamelin" was tried as a subject for a poem by the father before it was adopted with such success by the son. He was a good athlete and enjoyed splendid health. He lived to be nearly eighty-five, and it is said that when he was dying he said to his son, "What do you think death is, Robert? Is it a fainting or is it a pang?"

The poet's mother, Sarah Anne, or Sarianna, was the daughter of William Wildemann, a mariner of Dundee. His father had been a sugar-refiner in the same town, and the family had come originally from Hamburg. Carlyle spoke of her as "the true type of a Scottish gentlewoman," and her son said of her, "She was a divine woman." As a little child Browning went first to a day-school a short distance from his own home. He is said to have left because he was so much cleverer than the other boys. He was then sent to a preparatory school kept by two Misses Ready, and eventually to the superior school at Peckham, of which their brother, the Rev. Thomas Ready, was head master. At the age of fourteen he left school for ever. As a child he was very fond of animals, and studied their habits with an affectionate sympathy which frequently shows itself in his poems, and indeed is essential to a poet. He kept owls and monkeys, magpies and hedgehogs, an eagle, and even a couple of large snakes. He frequently asked his friends to catch him an eft or a frog. At a later period he had a pet toad, which used to come out of its hole when called, and allowed the poet to scratch his head. When his friends visited him in Warwick Crescent they found a tiny owl was seated on the door lintel.

Whilst living at home he was left entirely to himself. He said at a much later period: "It would have been quite unpardonable in my case not to have done my best. My dear father put me in a condition most favourable for the best work

I was capable of. When I think of the many authors who have had to fight their way through all sorts of difficulties, I have no reason to be proud of my achievement. My father secured for me all the ease and comfort which a literary man needs to do good work. It would have been shameful if I had not done my best to realize his expectations of me." The house at Camberwell was crammed with books, and Robert read omnivorously. He covered the wide fields of literature and history. One of his most favourite books was Quarles's "Emblems." Walpole's "Letters," Junius, and Voltaire are also mentioned as amongst his earliest studies. His father knew Greek and taught the son. Byron was at that time his chief master, as he was of all contemporary poets, notably of Tennyson. At the age of twelve, in the year of Byron's death, he collected a number of short poems into a volume and called it "Incondita." He endeavoured in vain to obtain a publisher. His mother copied the poems out and showed them to her friends, amongst others to a Miss Flower. This lady took a transcript of them and submitted the boyish productions to the well-known Unitarian minister and critic, Mr. W. J. Fox. At a later period both originals and copies were destroyed. Strange to say, their fault is said to have lain in too great splendour of language and too little wealth of thought.

About this time Browning came under the influence of Shelley and Keats, books which his mother had great difficulty in procuring, because the ordinary booksellers had never heard of them. He then came to know nearly all Shelley's writings except "The Cenci." He often in after years remembered the night when he first looked into these volumes. It was in the month of May, and in two neighbouring trees two nightingales were striving for mastery. He felt the thrill of a sudden revelation, and Shelley exercised over him throughout his life the mastery of a guardian spirit. Although Browning was not at school he was still under some educational discipline. A tutor came to the house in the mornings. The afternoons were devoted to singing, music, dancing, riding, boxing, and fencing. He played the piano with a certain amount of skill. The first time I called upon him I found him playing Schumann's "Carnival," not a very easy piece. He even composed songs,

and was also to the end of his life an accomplished swimmer. For two years he had a French tutor, and at the age of eighteen he attended the classes of Professor Long, who taught Greek at University College, London. He is described by a fellow-student at this time as "a bright handsome youth with long black hair falling over his shoulders." At this time he determined not to devote himself to any of the pursuits by which fortunes are made in life, but to consecrate himself to the serious service of literature. He conceived the idea of a great portrait gallery of typical men and women, but the only portion of the scheme which was completed was "Pauline." I heard an account of Pauline many years ago from the author's own lips, and my recollection of it does not tally precisely with the accounts given in printed narratives. He said that it was written and printed surreptitiously, and that he used to steal out at night to correct the proofs at Richmond, which will account for the place Richmond occurring in the preface. He also said that the book fell into the hands of Mr. John Stuart Mill, who greatly admired it. Mill had just started the reputation of Alfred Tennyson by a sympathetic review. He desired to do the same for Browning in Tait's *Edinburgh Magazine*, but on offering to review "Pauline" he was told that it had been already criticised. On minute inspection he found that the last two words of the previous number, attached to the notices of books, were "Pauline—A piece of pure bewilderment." He inquired the reason of this unfavourable criticism, and learnt that the printer, wanting a line more copy, the assistant editor had taken up a thin little book of poetry lying before him, and finding that he could not understand it had condemned it as unintelligible. "Pauline" appeared anonymously in 1833. The expense of printing was paid by his aunt, Mrs. Silverstone. "Pauline" consists of a thousand and thirty lines. Allan Cunningham said of it in the *Athenaeum*: "There is not a little true poetry in this very little book. Here and there we have a touch of the mysterious which we cannot admire, and now and then a want of melody which we can forgive, with perhaps more abruptness than is necessary. All that, however, is as a grain of sand in a cup of pure water, compared to the nature, passion, and fancy of the

poem. ' We open the book at random ; but fine things abound. Description and sentiment are everywhere beautifully mingled. We hope the author's next strains will be more cheerful and as original as these. To one who sings so naturally poetry must be as easy as music is to a bird, and no doubt it has a solace all its own.' " Browning himself thought little of the work. He wrote : " ' Pauline '—written in pursuance of a foolish plan, I forget, or have no wish to remember, involving the assumption of several distinct characters. The world was also to guess that such an opera, such a comedy, such a speech proceeded from the same notable person ; " and again, " only this crab remains of the shapeless tree of life in my fool's paradise." Rossetti came accidentally across the book in the British Museum, and copied it out, feeling sure that it was written by Browning. A copy was once sold at a public sale for twenty-five guineas. The author reprinted it in 1867, fearing that it might be pirated in America.

" Pauline " bears date October 22, 1832. In the winter of 1833-34 Browning travelled to Russia and was abroad three months. He went as Secretary to the Russian Consul-General. He enjoyed the society of the Russian capital, and witnessed the breaking up of the ice in the Neva, and the ceremony of the Czar drinking the first glass of water from the river. On his return he contributed some poems to the *Monthly Repository*, edited by his friend Mr. Fox. Five of them appeared at intervals, all signed Z. The first was a sonnet, not very successful. The second, "A King lived long ago," included afterwards in "Pippa Passes." Then followed "Porphyria's Lover," "Johannes Agricola," and some lines, " Still ailing, wind ? wilt be appeased or no ? " What afterwards appeared in a revised form is the first six stanzas of "James Lee." Two of these poems, "Porphyria" and "Agricola," were afterwards reprinted in "Bells and Pomegranates," under the title of "Madhouse Cells;" and "Porphyria" is certainly as striking a picture of madness as literature contains. But Browning's serious occupation during the winter of 1834-35 was the writing of "Paracelsus," which was concluded in the spring of the latter year. This was a truly great work, full of beauties, not only of the more recondite kind but such as appeal to every one."

Nothing can be more melodious or more affecting than the lyric song, "Over the sea our galleys went." The book was fully appreciated at the time by Mr. Fox and John Forster. One wrote: "The work before us has truth and life in it, and gave us the thrill and laid hold of us with the power, the sensation of which has never yet failed us as a test of genius." Mr. Forster placed Browning at once by the side of Shelley, Coleridge, and Wordsworth.

Soon after this the Browning family went to live at Hatcham, in a house with a stable and a large garden. Here the poet made friends with a toad, which followed him about and allowed itself to be stroked. This strange pet was unfortunately killed by the gardener. Here, too, he first became acquainted with Carlyle. In November, 1835, he first met Macready, and made a great impression on him. The actor read "Paracelsus" and thought it a work of great daring, starred with poetry of thought, feeling, and diction. He inferred that the writer could scarcely fail to be a leading spirit of his time. The spring of the following year there was talk between them of Browning writing a tragedy, and in August we hear that the subject of Strafford had been chosen. Macready thought that he could not have hit upon one that would have been more suitable. The reason for this choice was that Browning had been treating the subject in a different manner. John Forster, whose acquaintance Browning had made in Germany, was writing some lives of the statesmen of the Commonwealth for Lardner's "Cabinet Cyclopædia." He had fallen ill, and not being able to finish the life of Strafford, had requested Browning to complete it for him. Browning did so, and it is believed by competent critics that almost the whole of the existing life is from Browning's pen. The play of "Strafford" was completed by the end of March. It was accepted with avidity by Mr. Osbaldiston, the manager of Covent Garden Theatre, who agreed to give the author £12 a night for twenty-five nights, and £10 a night for ten nights beyond. It was acted on May 1 and obtained a certain amount of success. Macready was acknowledged to be admirable in the principal character, and Helen Faucit in Lady Carlisle. But the King was so bad an actor that he ought to have been driven from the stage, and the Queen was not much

better. The performances came to an abrupt conclusion because Vandenhoff, who played the part of Pym, was drawn aside by a better engagement at another theatre. The play was published by Messrs. Longman, but only had a moderate sale. The poet in the original preface described the play as "one of action in character rather than character in action," but claimed historical faithfulness for the portraits, excepting that of Lady Carlisle. He tells us also that the Italian boat-song comes from Redi's "*Bacco in Toscana.*"

Browning had, according to his own account, been engaged for some time on a poem of a very different nature when he was induced to write "*Strafford.*" This was the poem of "*Sordello,*" perhaps the greatest of his works. It occupied him for several years, and was not published till 1840. He must have worked at it during the winter of 1837-38, for he writes on Good Friday in the latter year that he is sailing that morning for Venice, intending to finish his poem amongst the scenes it describes. He went through the Bay of Biscay and suffered very much from the rough weather. The Captain supported him on deck as they passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, that he might gaze on the sight. At this time he wrote, "How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix." "Under the bulwark of a vessel off the African coast, after I had been at sea long enough to appreciate even the fancy of a gallop on the back of a certain good horse 'York,' then in my stable at home." "*Home Thoughts from the Sea,*" written at the same time, tells us what he saw :—

"Nobly, nobly, Cape St. Vincent to the north-west died away,
"Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red reeking, into Cadiz Bay ;
"Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay ;
"In the dimmest north-east distance dawnd Gibraltar, grand and gray."

He went to Trieste, then to Venice, then through Treviso and Bassano to the mountains, visiting "delicious Asolo, all my places and castles you will see." Then to Vicenza, Padua, and Venice again. Then to Verona and Trent, through the Tyrol to Innsbruck, to Munich, Salzburg, Frankfort, and Mainz ; then down the Rhine to Cologne, and home by Aix-la-Chapelle, Liège, and Antwerp. He returned in the summer of 1838, "*Sordello*" did not appear till 1840.

"Sordello" is one of the very greatest of Browning's productions, perhaps his masterpiece. Starting from the casual and mysterious mention of Sordello in Dante, it attempted to tell the story of a soul, and how it gained good out of everything, in which it seemed only to fail. All the stages and processes are described by which the soul of Sordello comes into play. It is common to call "Sordello" obscure; to relate how Douglas Jerrold once thought that he was mad because he could not understand it, and was relieved to find that everyone else was as mad as himself. With regard to this charge it will be well to quote the remark of another great poet, Mr. Swinburne. He says: "If there is any great quality more perceptible than another in Mr. Browning's intellect, it is his decisive and incisive faculty of thought, his sureness and intensity of perception, his rapid and trenchant resolution of aim. To charge him with obscurity is about as accurate as to call Lynceus purblind, or complain of the slowness of the telegraphic wire. He is something too much the reverse of obscure; he is too brilliant and subtle for the ready reader of a ready writer to follow with any certainty the track of an intelligence which moves with such incessant rapidity. The rate of his thoughts is to that of another man's as the speed of a railway to that of a waggon. The very evidence of Mr. Browning's aim and method is such as implies above all other things the possession of a quality the very opposite of obscurity,—a faculty of spiritual illumination, rapid and intense and subtle as lightning, which brings to bear upon its central object, by way of direct and vivid illustration, every symbol and every detail on which its light is flashed in passing."

In 1841 appeared "Pippa Passes," as the first instalment of "Bells and Pomegranates." This requires some explanation. This exquisite poem and two tragedies were lying in Browning's desk awaiting a publisher. Just at this time Mr. Moxon said that he was bringing out some editions of the Elizabethan dramatists in a cheap form, and that if Browning liked to use the same cheap type he might have the opportunity of doing so. It was agreed that each poem should form a brochure of sixteen pages in double columns, which would cost not more than

twelve or fifteen pounds. In this manner eight numbers of "Bells and Pomegranates" appeared between 1841 and 1846, in yellow paper covers. The price was at first sixpence, but it was raised to a shilling, which greatly increased the sale, and finally to half-a-crown. These strangely printed pages, of which my elder brother, himself a poet, was very fond, are amongst my earliest recollections. Pippa is a young girl of Asolo, who on her year's holiday from silk-weaving, during the course of her pleasure ramble, unconsciously influences, through her innocent songs, the various groups of human life she passes—the adulterous blood-stained lover, the dreaming artist, the scheming Italian patriot, the crafty Churchman. An advertisement to the first edition of this poem says: "Two or three years ago I wrote a play about which the chief matter I much care to recollect at present is that a Pitful of good-natured people applauded it. Ever since I have been desirous of doing something in the same way that should better award their attention. What follows I mean for the first of a series of dramatised pieces to come out at intervals; and I amuse myself by fancying that the cheap mode in which they appear will, for once, help me to a call of Pit audience again. Of course such a work must go on no longer than it is liked, and to provide against a too certain and but too possible contingency, let me hasten to say now—what, if I were sure of success, I would try to say circumstantially enough at the close—that I dedicate my best intentions most admiringly to the author of 'Ion,' most affectionately to Serjeant Talfourd."

The second volume of "Bells and Pomegranates" contained a play, "King Victor and King Charles." The King Victor of Sardinia was the Duke of Savoy, well known to Englishmen in the war of the Spanish Succession and the Peace of Utrecht. The play does not seem to have attracted any great attention. The third number, published in the same year, contained, under the title of "Dramatic Lyrics," a number of pieces, now well known, and written on different occasions. Of these, "In a Gondola," was written to illustrate a picture by MacLise exhibited at the British Institution in 1842. "Waring" referred to a friend of Browning's, Alfred Dommett, who went to New Zealand and eventually became Prime Minister there. Some

ten years later Browning wrote the poem on the "Guardian Angel at Fano" for him, ending thus:—

" My love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end?
This is Ancona; yonder rolls the sea."

"Cristine," rather an obscure poem, is supposed to refer to someone who fell in love with Queen Victoria. The two poems, in "Madhouse Cells," were written six years before. The last poem in the number is the "Pied Piper of Hamelin," a rhymed version of the story told in Howell's "Letters." It was written for William Macready, the eldest son of Macready the actor who died in Ceylon in 1871. He had a talent for drawing, and asked Browning to write him something to illustrate. Browning wrote a short poem on an account of the death of the Pope's Legate at the Council of Trent. Young Macready's drawings for this were so clever that Browning "tried at a more picturesque subject for him, and wrote the 'Piper,' a thing of joy for ever to all with the child's heart, young and old."

Number IV. of "Bells and Pomegranates" contained "The Return of the Druses," which had been announced in "Sordello" as "'Mansor the Hierophant,' in preparation." It was a play in five acts. One of the characters is Karshook, a name which occurs in two other poems of Browning's.

The fifth number of "Bells and Pomegranates," published also in 1843, contained a tragedy in three acts, "A Blot on the Scutcheon." It was played at Drury Lane, Mr. Phelps, Miss Faust, and Mrs. Stirling forming part of the cast. The play was revived at Sadler's Wells in 1848. It was written very hurriedly, in four or five days. The production led to a misunderstanding, and then to a breach of friendship between Browning and Macready, the dispute turning mainly on the question as to whether Phelps or Macready was to act the principal part. It is said that Browning, on returning to the green-room after the rehearsal, drove his hat more firmly on to his head and said to Macready, "I beg pardon, sir, but you have given the part to Mr. Phelps, and I am satisfied that he should act it," and that when Macready heard this he crushed up the manuscript and flung it on the ground. The two friends did not meet again until Browning had returned a widower

from Italy, and Macready had also lost his wife. They greeted each other with deep emotion. The next instalment of the periodical contained "Colombe's Birthday," a play in five acts. It was not acted until nine years later, when Miss Helen Faucit again took the principal part.

The same year, 1844, saw the composition of "The Laboratory," written for *Hood's Magazine*, also "Claret and Tokay," "Garden Fancies," "The Boy and the Angel," "The Tomb at St. Praxed's," and "The Flight of the Duchess," printed in the same periodical. Tom Hood, the famous humourist, had been seized with a severe attack of haemorrhage from the lungs, so that fears were entertained for his life. Monckton Milnes, afterwards Lord Houghton, asked Browning to help in making up some numbers of the magazine for its incapacitated editor, which he did. The seventh number of "Bells and Pomegranates" contained these six poems, as well as the four published in the *Monthly Repository*. In this also appeared "The Lost Leader," an often quoted invective against political renegades. It was aimed at Wordsworth, who had just turned Tory, but other men and incidents were mixed up in the poet's mind. It also contains the great poem of "Saul." In fact this volume contains some of the finest poetry which Browning ever wrote. It appeared in 1845, and in the previous autumn Browning had been to Italy again, sailing direct to Naples. He stayed some time at Rome, and on his return called upon Trelawney, the friend of Byron and Shelley, at Leghorn. What pleasure to talk with a man who had "seen Shelley plain!" The "Englishman in Italy" gives us a graphic picture of some reminiscences of this tour.

The last number of "Bells and Pomegranates," the eighth, contained "Luria," a tragedy in five acts, and "A Soul's Tragedy," in two parts, one the "Poetry of Chiappino's Life" in blank verse, and the second part, its Prose, in prose. The tone of the poem is, in the main, humorous. Shortly after the publication of this number a great change took place in Browning's life. On September 12, 1846, he married, at St. Marylebone Parish Church, the great poetess Elizabeth Barrett Barrett, he being thirty-four years of age, and she forty. She was the daughter of a Mr. Moulton, who had married an

heiress, Miss Barrett, and added her name to his. She was a great invalid, and lived in two rooms at the top of a house in Wimpole Street. Her father was a wealthy man, but had the peculiarity that he would never hear of his children marrying, but loved to keep them about him. I have heard from relations how "Ba," as Miss Barrett was affectionately called, was always in bed or on the sofa, and how visitors stole up to call upon her by a special staircase. She was regarded as quite unable to move, but one morning the startling news came that she was married and had left her father's house. She had already made a considerable name as a poetess, and had published "Lady Geraldine's Courtship" during Browning's absence from England. Browning expressed admiration of it to Mr. Kenyon, Miss Barrett's cousin, saying that she was a great invalid and saw no one, "but great souls jump at sympathy." A correspondence was begun which lasted for some months. After this Browning asked if he might call, but received the reply, "There is nothing to see in me, nothing to hear in me. I am a weed fit for the ground and darkness." However, he persevered and was admitted. At last an engagement was made between them contingent on Miss Barrett being restored to health. The stimulus of love and hope did improve her condition. They saw each other three times a week and exchanged letters constantly. Towards the autumn of 1846 Miss Barrett's doctor pronounced that her only chance of improvement lay in spending the winter in the South of Europe. Mr. Barrett refused to part with her or to allow his son to accompany her. The only hope was to travel as Browning's wife. They were married, as I have said above, on September 12th. For a week they returned to their ordinary life, only they did not see each other. Browning could not bear to ask for his wife under a false name. She dare not tell her father because she was certain of his refusal, and she would then have been guilty of active instead of passive disobedience. Mr. Barrett, when Browning's cause was pleaded at a later period, said: "I have no objection to the young man, but my daughter should have been thinking of another world." He had in fact an insuperable objection to his children leaving him. On the evening of September 19th, just a week after her

marriage, Mrs. Browning stole away from her father's house accompanied by her maid and her dog Flush. That night they crossed by Havre to Paris. Her sister had been in the secret, but her brothers at that time shared the wrath of their father at the marriage.

From Paris they went to Pisa. In April, 1847, they passed from Pisa to Florence, and stayed there some time. They had intended to spend the next winter in Rome, but they found themselves so devoted to Florence that the idea was given up, and they engaged apartments in the Piazza Pitti, just opposite the Grand Duke's palace. In the spring of 1848 they determined to furnish rooms in Florence for themselves (furniture being very cheap in those troubled times), and they established themselves in the well-known Casa Guidi, in the Via Maggio, the long streets on the other side of the Arno, "in the favourite suite of the last Count (his arms are in scagliola over the floor of my bedroom). Though we have six beautiful rooms and a kitchen, three of them quite palace rooms and opening on a terrace, and though such furniture as comes by slow degrees into them is antique and worthy of the place, we yet even have saved money by the end of the year." In August they went to Fano for a change, but were bitterly disappointed in it, the only redeeming feature apparently being Guercino's Guardian Angel. Then they spent a week at Ancona and returned to Florence. On March 9th, 1849, their son, Robert Barrett Browning, familiarly called Penini or Pen, was born, and just at the same time Browning's mother died. The summer was spent at the Baths of Lucca, the winter and spring in the Casa Guidi at Florence, Mrs. Browning being very strong and well. Venice was visited in June. Mrs. Browning writes in an ecstasy of delight: "The beauty of the architecture, the silver trail of water up between all that gorgeous colour and carving, the enchanting silence, the music, the gondolas—I mix up all together and maintain that nothing is like it, nothing equal to it—not a second Venice in the world."

The first two years of Browning's married life seem to have been completely absorbed by the sense of his new position. When, however, the pair was settled down in the Casa Guidi he resumed work again, and by the close of 1848 prepared a new

edition of his poems, containing "Paracelsus" and "Bells and Pomegranates." These were published in the following year with these words prefixed: "Many of these pieces were out of print, the rest had been withdrawn from circulation, when the corrected edition, now submitted to the reader, was prepared. The various poems and dramas have received the author's most careful revision." In Florence, in 1850, he wrote the poem "Christmas Eve and Easter Day," which was published in the same year. This remarkable poem consists of arguments on the evidence of religion, and on the proportionate influence which love and knowledge should respectively exercise upon the human soul. The poet takes his stand between the infallible teacher and the infidel; between him who discards faith altogether and him who yields it up into the keeping of others. He declares that he humbly accepts the truth that genuine faith can only be born from uncertainty, and that true resolution and self-reliance can only spring from modesty and self-distrust. The problems here stated are worked out with greater depth and thoroughness in the later poem of "La Saiziaz."

In the summer of 1851 the Brownings went to London, saddened for him by the recollection of his mother's death. Mr. Barrett would not be persuaded to see his daughter, or even to kiss his grandchild. In the autumn they proceeded to Paris, taking an apartment in the Avenue des Champs Elysées. Carlyle travelled with them to Paris, and seems to have been a very pleasant companion. At Paris they went to Madame Mohl's, the last of the great literary *salons*, which I used to visit in the later days of the Empire. They also saw a great deal of Georges Sand. During this winter also Browning made the acquaintance of Mr. Joseph Milsand, the sympathetic writer to whom he afterwards dedicated the new edition of "Sordello." Before the end of the year Browning had written a preface to some supposed essays of Shelley, which were published by Moxon. The occasion was as follows:—In or before 1851 a forger named Gordon, who said that he was a natural son of Lord Byron, had offered for sale some letters of Shelley and Byron. The Shelley letters were bought by Moxon, and the Byron letters by Murray. Moxon asked Browning to write a preface to the letters, and published them.

Murray waited for a time, and by the discovery of the forgery avoided the trouble and expense to which his colleague was exposed. Browning's preface had nothing specially to do with the letters, but was mainly a discussion on poets, objective and subjective, in general, and on Shelley in particular. He sums up his opinion of Shelley as a poet in the following terms :—" In the hierarchy of creative minds it is the presence of the highest faculty that gives first rank, in virtue of its kind, not degree; no pretension of a lower nature, whatever the completeness of development, or variety of effect, impeding the precedence of the rarer endowment, though only in the germ." What, then, was Shelley's " noblest and predominating characteristic ? This I call his simultaneous perception of Power and Love in the absolute, and of Beauty and Good in the concrete, while he throws, from his poet's status between both, swifter, subtler, and more numerous films, for the connection of each with each, than have been thrown by any modern artificer of whom I have knowledge ; proving how, as he says,—

"The spirit of the worm within the sod
"In love and worship blends itself with God."

Browning's next volume was " Men and Women," published in 1851, and said in the Tauchnitz edition to have been written in " London and Florence, 184- 185-." There is scarcely one of these that has not become a household word in English literature. We know when some of these poems were written. In the three first days of 1852, January 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, Browning wrote three great poems, " Love among the Ruins," " Women and Roses," and " Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came." The last is one of the most powerful and striking of his compositions, and although it would serve very well as an allegory of life, is apparently not an allegory, but merely a piece of imagination based upon the figures in a piece of old tapestry. The Brownings returned to London in the summer of 1852 and lodged at 53, Welbeck Street, near Wimpole Street, his wife's old home. They made the acquaintance of Dante G. Rossetti. In the succeeding winter they returned again to Casa Guidi, resuming their course of quiet laborious life. It is recorded, perhaps with some exaggeration, that during the fifteen years of his married life Browning never dined away from home except-

ing on one occasion. The summer and autumn of this year was passed at the Baths of Lucca, where they occupied a villa close to that in which Mr. and Mrs. Story lived. Here he worked at "Men and Women," writing the first part on September 24. The scene of the declaration in "By the Fireside" was laid in an adjacent mountain gorge, to which he walked or rode. During this summer also Mr. Lytton, afterwards Lord Lytton, paid them a fortnight's visit.

The succeeding winter the Brownings spent in Rome with pleasant society. They had close to them William Story, the sculptor, and his wife, saddened, however, by the sudden death of their eldest boy; Miss Fanny Kemble and Mrs. Sartoris, her sister; also Thackeray the novelist, about whom Mrs. Browning has a curious remark in one of her letters: "If anybody wants small talk by handfuls of glittering dust swept out of *salons*, here's Mr. Thackeray besides!" In June they returned to Florence, and probably stayed there through the winter. In 1855 they came to London, living at 13, Dorset Street, Portman Square. In this house, on September 27, Tennyson read his new poem, "Maud," to Mrs. Browning, while Rossetti made a pen-and-ink drawing of him. These later months were spent in revising "Men and Women" for the press, the work making its appearance before the end of the year in two volumes. As soon as the volumes were ready for printing they removed to Paris, where Mrs. Browning wrote "Aurora Leigh." The following summer they spent in London, and then returned to Florence. Here they heard the news of Mr. Kenyon's death, and shortly afterwards of Mr. Barrett's. The autumn of 1859 was spent in a villa in the neighbourhood of Siena, the Storys occupying another close by, and Landor an apartment in a house a few steps off. I have often heard an account of the incidents of this autumn from Story and his wife, and of the exuberant vitality shown by Browning in all the relations of life.

A letter from Mrs. Browning to Miss Browning, written in the winter of 1859, gives a graphic description of Browning's pursuits at this time, and remarks upon the reputation which he held in public estimation. Browning had learnt to model in clay from William Story the sculptor. His wife says: "Robert

has made his third bust copied from the antique. He breaks them all up as they are finished—it is only a matter of education. When the power of execution is achieved he will try at something original. Then reading hurts him; as long as I have known him he has not been able to read long at a time; he can do it better now than at the beginning. The consequence of which is that an active occupation is a salvation to him. I wanted his poems done this winter very much, and here was a light room with three windows consecrated to his use. Then he worked himself out by writing for three or four hours together—there has been little poetry done since last winter, when he did much. He was not inclined to write this winter. The modelling combines body work and soul work, and the more tired he has been, and the more his back ached, poor fellow, the more he has exulted and been happy. So I couldn't be much in opposition against the sculpture—I couldn't, in fact, at all. He has material for a volume, and will work at it this summer, he says." The same letter contains complaint about the neglect with which Browning was treated in England. An English lady of rank, who knew the Brownings, asked the American Minister whether the poet was not an American, upon which the Minister replied, "Is it possible that *you* ask me this? Why, there is not so poor a village in the United States where they would not tell you that Robert Browning was an Englishman, and that they were sorry he was not an American." This indifference was not unknown in Florence itself, because an old resident once said to me, "Robert Browning a poet! *She* was the poetess. We never knew that he was a poet too." This tie of ideal happiness was, however, to be severed. Mrs. Browning died at Casa Guidi on June 29, 1861, soon after their return from Rome to Florence. The attack which put an end to so frail a life was only slight, and it is supposed that the shock of Cavour's death on June 6th gave the final blow. Her last letter to her sister-in-law said: "We come home into a cloud here. I can scarcely command voice or heart to name Cavour. That great soul which meditated and made Italy has gone to the diviner country. If tears or blood could have saved him to us he should have had mine."

Casa Guidi, the residence and the death-place of Mrs. Brown-

ing, has been described by a loving friend;—"Those who have known Casa Guidi as it was could hardly enter the loved rooms now and speak above a whisper. They who have been so favoured can never forget the square ante-room, with its great picture and pianoforte, at which the boy Browning passed many an hour; the little dining-room covered with tapestry, where hung medallions of Tennyson, Carlyle, and Robert Browning; the long room filled with plaster casts and studies, which was Mr. Browning's retreat; and, dearest of all, the large drawing-room, where *she* always sat. It opens upon a balcony filled with plants, and looks out upon the iron-grey church of Santa Felice. There was something about this room that seemed to make it a proper and especial haunt for poets. The dark shadows and subdued light gave it a decay look, which was enhanced by the tapestry-covered walls and the old picture of saints that looked out sadly from their carved frame of black wood. Large bookcases, constructed of specimens of Florentine carving, selected by Mr. Browning, were brimming over with wise-looking books. Tables were covered with more gaily bound volumes, the gifts of brother authors. Dante's grave profile, a cast of Keats's face and brow taken after death, a pen-and-ink sketch of Tennyson, the genial face of John Kenyon, Mrs. Browning's good friend and relative, little paintings of the boy Browning, all attracted the eye in turn and gave rise to a thousand musings. A quaint mirror, easy-chairs and sofas, and a hundred nothings that always add an indescribable charm, were all massed in the room. But the glory of all, and that which sanctified all, was seated in a low arm-chair near the door. A small table strewn with writing materials, books, and newspapers was always by her side."

Browning left Florence and never saw it again. It was indeed many years before he had the courage to revisit Italy. He first went to his father and sister near Dinard, and then to London. He took a house in Warwick Crescent, which was for many years his home. The next summer was spent in the Pyrenees. He writes from Biarritz on September 19, 1862: "For me, I have got on by having a great read of Euripides, the one book I brought with me, besides attending to my own matters, my new poem that is about to be, and of which the

whole is pretty well in my head—the Roman murder story, you know." This is the first mention of "The Ring and the Book," which was published in four volumes in 1868-69.

The summers of 1864 and 1865 were spent at Ste. Marie near Venice, on the coast of Brittany. Writing to Leighton from this place he says: "I live upon milk and fruit, bathe daily, do a good morning's work, read a little with Pen and somewhat more by myself, go to bed early and get up earlyish, rather liking it all." In 1864 appeared "Dramatis Personæ," a volume of 250 pages, containing eighteen poems. The two first, "James Lee's Wife" and "Gold Hair" were suggested by Pernic. "Abt Vogler" is a wonderful effort. "Rabbi Ben Ezra," one of the deepest of the poet's productions. "A Death in the Desert" is a description of St. John's death and a defence of Christianity. "Prospice" is a noble poem, bidding not to be afraid of death. "Mr. Sludge, The Medium," shows Browning's hatred to spiritualism, whereas his wife was rather inclined to support it. This was the first book of Browning's that could really be called popular. It had a much larger sale than any of his previous works. It prepared the way for the edition of his works in six volumes published by Smith & Elder, in which "Pauline" was included for the first time. The culmination, however, of his fame was reached by the publication of "The Ring and the Book," in four volumes, at the end of 1868 and the beginning of 1869. This poem deserves a special notice. In June, 1866, his father had died rather suddenly in Paris, three weeks before the completion of his eighty-fifth year. His son tells us that he retained all his faculties to the last, and was utterly indifferent to death, asking with surprise what it was we were affected about, since he was perfectly happy. The summer was spent at Le Croisic, which became the scene of two of Browning's poems. It is a quaint little village whose sandbanks jut out into the Bay of Biscay, near the mouth of the Loire, forming the back of the great salt plains that stretch down from Guérande to the sea. He dated the poem of "Hervé Riel" from this place on September 30, 1867, and a month later he was elected an honorary fellow of Balliol College, Oxford. The summer of 1868 was spent at Audierai, an obscure place on the coast of Brittany, and here

"The Ring and the Book" made great progress. I remember his telling me in the summer of this year in London that he was working hard at it, beginning every day at five o'clock in the morning.

The origin of the poem is interesting. One day Browning found on an old curiosity stall in the Piazza San Lorenzo at Florence a parchment-covered book, containing the record of a murder which had taken place in Rome. It contained the whole history of the case—pleadings, counter-pleadings, depositions of defendant's witnesses, letters announcing the execution of the murderer. The book was purchased for the sum of eightpence, and became the raw material of the poem. The other word "ring" is due to the fact that the murder case forms a circle of evidence as to its one central truth, and this ring is formed as the Etruscan workman makes one. Alloy is mixed with the gold to make it harder, so as to bear the hammer or the file, and when the ring is completed the alloy is discharged and a pure gold ornament remains. Browning took great pains to write the poem in intelligible English, and it sprung at once into popularity. The *Athenaeum* wrote of it immediately with great enthusiasm: "At last the *opus magnum* of our generation lies before the world. The fascination of the work is still so strong upon us, our eyes are still so spell-bound by the immortal features of Pompilia (which shine through the troubled merits of the story with almost insufferable beauty), that we feel it difficult to write calmly and without exaggeration; yet we must record at once our conviction, not merely that 'The Ring and the Book' is beyond all parallel the supremest poetical achievement of our time, but that it is the most precious and profound spiritual treasure that England has produced since the days of Shakespeare. Its intellectual greatness is as nothing compared with its transcendent spiritual teaching."

Browning published nothing between 1869 to 1871. In 1869 he went with the Storys on a tour in Scotland, including a visit to Louisa Lady Ashburton at Loch Luichart, who always remained a warm friend of his. In 1870, the year of the war, he was in France at St. Aubin, with his friend Milsand in a cottage two steps off. In consequence of the war they had the

greatest difficulty in getting back to their own country. The boats from Calais and Boulogne were no longer running; the boats from Havre had been stopped. With great trouble they arrived at Honfleur, where they found an English vessel just about to convey cattle to Southampton. Setting out at midnight they reached England. In 1871 two poems appeared, "Balaustion's Adventure" and "Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau,—Saviour of Society." The first was suggested by Lady Cowper, and is dedicated to her in a few graceful lines, in which he says that the poem absolutely owes its existence to her. It contains a translation of the "Alcestis" of Euripides. The poem was said by a scholar to be a model of facile felicity. "Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau" is a satire on Louis Napoleon, in the form of a monologue addressed to a lady whom he had met in Leicester Square. It was written in Scotland in the autumn of 1871. Browning says of the subject of it: "I thought badly of him at the beginning of his career; better afterwards on the strength of the promise he made and gave indications of intending to redeem. I think him very weak in the last miserable year." In the spring of 1872 Alfred Dommert, the "Waring" of the early poem, returned to England, and Browning says of him: "Waring came back the other day, after thirty years' absence, the same as ever—nearly. He had been Prime Minister at New Zealand for a year and a half, but gets tired and returns home with a poem."

To the spring of 1872 belongs also "Fifine at the Fair," a man's defence to his noble wife of his admiration for a very handsome, loose gipsy dancing-woman, and a discussion of the questions involved. It is described as a serio-fantastic discussion on the nature of sexual love, and its relation to all other modes of æsthetic life, and turns mainly on the question as to whether noble love best fulfils itself in constancy or in change, in devotion to one object or in the appreciation of many. The gipsy who was the original of "Fifine" was seen by Browning at Pornic. The autumn of 1872 was again spent at St. Aubin. Here he met Miss Annie Thackeray, who was staying close by. I remember well hearing the account of their stay from her, and how from the headdress of the peasants they called the region "White Cotton Nightcap Country"

His subtlety made him change the colour into red. Browning wrote the poem in London in the autumn and published it in the succeeding spring. "Red Cotton Nightcap Country; or, Turf and Towers," is an absolutely true story, except where certain details had to be supplied by imagination. It is the story of Mellerio, a Paris jeweller, who died at St. Aubin, and was studied from the law papers used in the suit concerning his will. It is the tale of a modern Ultramontane Roman Catholic, driven into sheer madness by the conflicting emotions of illicit love which he cannot control, and extravagant religious devotion which he does not dare to resist. It was originally put into type with all the true names of persons and things, but on Lord Coleridge giving his opinion that its publication might be actionable, fictitious names were substituted for the real ones in every case.

After a summer spent in 1875 at Mers near Tréport, in company with his sister and Miss Egerton Smith, he wrote "Aristophanes' Apology, including the Last Adventure of Balaustion." The "Apology" is a defence of comedy as understood and practised by Aristophanes, that is, as a broad expression of the natural life, and a broad satire upon those who directly or indirectly condemn it. It is addressed to Euripides, and is to some extent an attack upon him. It was supposed to have been addressed to Balaustion, a Rhodian girl, on the day of Euripides' death. She replied to it, and also, in defence of Euripides, revised his play of "Hérakles," the manuscript of which he had given to her. "The Inn Album," the most powerful of Browning's later works, was also published in 1875. It contains more than 3,078 lines of blank verse, divided into eight sections. The idea is taken from a story of real-life related in the Greville Memoirs, but it is ennobled and refined by Browning's treatment of it. The story is highly sensational, and ends with suicide and a murder.

In 1876 a volume was published, "Pacchiarotto, and how he worked in distemper," containing nineteen poems, only one of which, "Hervé Riel," had been published before. The *Athenaeum* remarks on this volume: "Mr. Browning's mistake all through has been to suppose that people will take the trouble to wrestle with difficulties; that, because his longer

poems are worth understanding, the public would try to understand them. If there is a defect in the 'Pacchiarotto' volume it is that Mr. Browning betrays a tendency to quarrel with his critics, and to write not so much about himself as *at* himself. If a man chooses to say that Mr. Browning is grotesque, uncouth, chaotic, and no poet, the criticism may please the critic and cannot possibly hurt Mr. Browning."

In the spring of 1877 Browning paid a visit to Professor Colvin and myself at Cambridge. He dined with me one evening in College, meeting Joachim and others. I remember a conversation as to the merits of Beethoven, in which Browning, Joachim, Franz Hüber, and Davidson took part. The general result was unfavourable to Beethoven as a great musician; Mozart was given a higher place, but supremacy was awarded to Beethoven as a man of intellect. Browning, of course, visited Oxford more often than Cambridge, because he was a Fellow of Balliol, but an honorary degree was given to him by Cambridge in 1879, and by Oxford not till 1882. The winter's work of this year had been the translation of the "Agamemnon" of Aeschylus. The prominence given by his translation to this greatest of Greek plays may perhaps have inspired the idea of acting it in the original tongue at Oxford, a performance which proved the forerunner of many a similar performance since. Mr. J. A. Symonds, a most competent critic, calls it the Herculean achievement of a scholar-poet's ripe genius. He says: "The more we examine the workmanship of Mr. Browning's version, comparing English and Greek verses in detail, the more reason we shall have to wonder at his dexterity in matching word with word, and maintaining the exact order of the original."

The summer of 1877 was spent at La Saisiaz, a country-house in the district of the Salève, near Geneva. Browning describes it in the following words:—"How lovely is this place in its solitude and seclusion, with its trees and shrubs and flowers, and, above all, its live mountain-stream which supplies three fountains, and two delightful baths, a marvel of delicate delight framed in with trees. I bathe three times a day, and then what a wonderful view from the chalet on every side! Geneva lying under us with the lake, and the whole plain

bounded by the Jura and our own Salève, which latter seems rather close behind our house, and yet takes a hard hour and a half to ascend." He stayed in this romantic solitude with his sister and an intimate friend, Miss Egerton-Smith, proprietress of the *Liverpool Mercury*, who for some years past had accompanied him to concerts in London, and on autumn tours abroad. A terrible event occurred. Miss Egerton-Smith died in what had seemed for her unusually good health, just as she was preparing for a mountain excursion with the Brownings; the words still almost on her lips in which she had given some directions for their comfort. Browning was for the moment paralysed by the shock, and the result of the emotions thus roused was the poem of "La Saisiaz," which appeared in the following year. It contains a discussion as to the probability of a life after death, set in a description of the scene in which the event occurred. The same volume contains "The Two Poets of Croisic," which was written shortly before. This is an account of René Gentilhomme, who was born in 1610, and of Paul Desfuges Mailland, who lived a century later. The poem is concluded by a statement that you can test the comparative value of two poets by seeing which of the two leads the happier life. The poet must necessarily suffer, but he must make his suffering subservient to higher ends.

After the catastrophe of La Saisiaz Browning had a longing for Italy, which he had never visited since the death of his wife. I remember meeting him in the Athenæum Club in London on his return, and his telling that he had again had the courage to revisit Italy, and that he had found there had grown up since his departure a new national literature and a new national language. The heats of August were spent by his sister and himself in an hotel at the summit of the Splügen Pass, where he worked hard at "Dramatic Idylls." As soon as the temperature permitted they passed south, proceeding by the Lake of Como and Verona to Asolo and Venice—Asolo revisited after forty years' absence. The old inn in which he had previously stayed was gone, levelled with the ground, so he contented himself with the Stella d'Oro. At Venice he stayed a fortnight, the city in which he was eventually destined to die. The following year was marked by the publication of the first

series of "Dramatic Idylls," and by the conferring of an honorary degree by the University of Cambridge. The volume contains some poems of great interest. "Ivan Ivanovitch," composed at the Splügen Hotel; "Tray," which is a protest against vivisection; "Ned Bratts," a poem which displays the working of conscience in two ruffians who were converted by reading Bunyan. In 1880 the summer holiday was again concluded at Venice, and another series of "Dramatic Idylls" was completed. It contains "Echetlos," the holder of the ploughshare at the Battle of Marathon. The moral of it is that great deeds last, but the doers' names die. The summer of 1881 and 1882 were spent at Saint-Pierre la Chartreuse, and 1883 at Gressoney Saint Jean, a lovely village which lies in the centre of a valley running due south from Monte Rosa. The later autumns were now always passed at Venice. "Jocoseria," a collection of small poems, grave and gay, saw the light in 1883. One of the most remarkable of these is "Donald," the story of a pitiless and ungrateful huntsman who killed the stag which had saved his life. "Jochanan Hakkadoch" also deserves mention as the story of a Rabbi who was enabled to extend his life for a year and three months beyond its appointed term, and of what knowledge came to him through the extension. In 1884 was published "Ferishtah's Fancies." Ferishtah is the name of a Dervish who enforces his teachings by familiar illustrations in the form of fancy or fable. Each fancy or fable, with its accompanying dialogue, is followed by a lyric in which the same or cognate ideas are expressed in an emotional form. The summer holiday of the brother and sister in the same year was spent in the life-giving climate of St. Moritz in the Engadine, where they stayed in the Villa Berry as the guests of that munificent patron of science, Mrs. Bloomfield Moore. Luckily they had a glorious season. In 1885 they returned to their old Alpine quarter, Gressoney St. Jean. In 1886 Miss Browning was too ill to leave England, and they established themselves for the autumn at the Hand Hotel at Llangollen, where they would be comparatively close neighbours of Sir Theodore and Lady Martin, who, as Helen Faucit, had more than once given distinction to Browning's dramas. The outcome of the autumn work was the "Parleyings With

Certain People of Importance in Their Day," which appeared in 1887. They take the old dramatic form, but show some signs of the garrulity and weakness of advancing years. The people parleyed with are six in number. Bernard de Mandeville, the author of "The Fable of the Bees;" Daniel Bartoli, a Jesuit and historian of his order; Christopher Smart, the author of "A Song to David," which he wrote in a madhouse with a key on the wainscoat of his cell, a poem which Rossetti describes as "a masterpiece of rich imagery, exhaustive resources, and reverberant sound;" George Bubb Dodington, the author of the famous "Diary;" "Francis Furini," A defence of painting from the nude model; Gerard de Lairesse, a Belgian painter who lived in the second half of the seventeenth century, and wrote a treatise on the art of painting, which became known to Browning when he was a child; and Charles Avison, the author of the "Grand March," and of the once famous song, "Sound the Loud Timbrel."

The latter half of 1887 witnessed his son's marriage to an American lady, and Browning's removal from Warwick Crescent to De Vere Gardens. Previous to settling in his new abode Browning spent the summer at St. Moritz with the same hospitable hostess as in the previous year. He now began to show signs of age, but changed little of his former habits. He suffered from continued colds one after another, yet he went out a good deal into society, and was seen on all important public occasions. "Rosny," the first poem in "Asolando," was composed in the December of this year, as were some other contributions to the volume, including "Bad Dreams." The "Ponte dell' Angelo" was written at Venice in the following autumn. In the spring of 1888 he went through the labour of revising his works for a uniform edition, which was issued in monthly volumes, and was completed in the summer of 1889. In this edition "Pauline" received a good deal of alteration, as well as the "Inn Album." In August brother and sister started for Primiero in the *Dolomites*. Browning was so ill that he was on the point of postponing his departure, and he suffered throughout the journey as he had never suffered in any journey before. However, when he got there he felt that it was the most beautiful place he was ever resident in. "You

would indeed delight," he writes, "in seeing the magnificence of the mountains in the range on either side, which, morning and evening, in turn, transmute literally to gold. Their utterly bare ridge of peaks and crags of all shape, quite naked of verdure, glow like yellow ore, and at times there is a silver change as the sun prevails or not. The valley is one green luxuriance on all sides : Indian corn, with beans, gourds, clover, cabbages, filling up the interstices; and the flowers, though not presenting any novelty to my uninitiated eyes, yet surely more large and purely developed than I remember to have seen elsewhere." From Primiero he went on to Venice, where he saw the sun rise every morning at six. His son was engaged in settling himself in the magnificent Palazzo Rezzonco, which he had recently purchased.

Browning did not return to England till later in the autumn, and got through the rigours of the climate better than in previous years. He paid a visit to Cambridge at the beginning of June, staying with the Master of Trinity. This was the last time I saw him. I walked with him to Mr. F. Myers's house, that he might be photographed by Mrs. Myers. It was an extremely hot day, and his prolonged stay in the close photographic studio exhausted him very much. He had to take my arm on his return, and as we walked under the avenue of elm-trees at the back of the College I thought he would have fainted, and I was relieved when he reached the Master's Lodge. I heard next morning that he was much better. I had no idea, however, that this weakness was an indication of fatal illness. He stayed quietly at home till the beginning of August, and then went to his favourite haunt, Asolo, as the guest of Mrs. Bronson. Here he suffered a good deal from cold, and had difficulty in breathing whenever he walked up hill. Still his spirits and mental energy were unsubdued. He wrote of Asolo to a friend: "Fortunately there is little changed here. My old Albergo, ruinous with earthquake, is down and done with. But few novelties are observable, except the regrettable one that the silk industry has been transported elsewhere. No more Pippas —at least of the silk-winding sort!" He so little thought that he was nearing the end of life that he bought a piece of land at Asolo, with the intention of building a house, which was to be

called Pippa's Tower. Many formalities had to be completed before the house was bought, and the vote which determined the purchase was not taken till the very evening of his death.

He reached Venico by the 1st of November, appearing to be in good health, but a scientific observer could have told that the heart was fatally weak. He was living in his son's new palace, the largest and most magnificent in Venice. At the end of November he caught a bronchial cold, but professed only to be waiting for the answer from Asolo, intending to start for England as soon as he received it. The real source of danger lay in his heart; but he attributed his malady to another cause, and adopted the wrong remedies. The bronchial attack was overcome, but the heart was unable to regain its power. His strength, however, was very great, and even on December 11 there was some hope of his recovery. After this he rapidly sank, and died at 10 p.m. on Thursday, December 12, 1889. He had said to a nurse five hours before the end: "I feel much worse; I know now that I must die." The first thought was to bury him in the old cemetery of Florence, by the side of his wife. But the cemetery was now closed, and was surrounded by the growing town. Whilst the matter was under discussion the offer of a grave in Westminster Abbey was made by the Dean. He was buried in Poet's Corner on December 31, 1889, and many of those who mourned by his tomb met not many years afterwards to stand in sorrow by the grave of his brother-poet, Alfred Tennyson.

A great critic has said: "I look up to Browning as one of the very few men known to me by their works who, with most cordial energy and invincible resolution, have lived thoroughly throughout the whole of their being, to the utmost verge of all their capacities, in his case truly colossal; lived and wrought thoroughly in sense and soul and intellect; lived at home in all realms of nature and human nature, art, and literature; whereas nearly all of us are really alive in but a small portion of our so much smaller beings, and drag wearily towards the grave our for the most part dead selves; dead from the suicidal poison of misuse and atrophy of disease. Confident and rejoicing in the stern and stress of the struggle, he has conquered life instead of being conquered by it; a victory so rare

as to be almost unique, especially among poets in these latter days." Such, indeed, is the spirit breathed in the last poem he ever wrote.

" At the midnight, in the silence of the sleep-time
When you set your fancies free,
Will they pass to where—by death, fools think, imprisoned
Low he lies whom once so loved you, whom you loved so,
Pity me ?

" O to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken !
What had I on earth to do
With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly ?
Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drivel,
Being—who ?

" One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break ;
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph.
Held we fall to rise, and baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

" Now at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time
> Greet the unseen with a cheer !
Bid him forward, breast and back, as either should be,
' Strive and thrive ' ! cry ' Speed—fight on, fare ever
There as here.' "

OSCAR BROWNING.

KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.
November 19, 1896.

P A R A C E L S U S.

P A R A C E L S U S.

PERSONS.

AUREOLUS PARACELSIUS.

FESTUS & } his friends.
MICHAL,

APRILE, an Italian Poet.

I.—PARACELSIUS ASPIRES.

SCENE.—*Würzburg—a garden in the environs.* 1512.

FESTUS, PARACELSIUS, MICHAL.

Par. Come close to me, dear friends ; still closer · thus !
Close to the heart which, though long time roll by
Ere it again beat quicker, pressed to yours,
As now it beats—perchance a long, long time—
At least henceforth your memories shall make
Quiet and fragrant as befits their home.
Nor shall my memory want a home in yours—
Alas, that it requires too well such free
Forgiving love as shall embalm it there !
For if you would remember me aright—
As I was born to be—you must forget
All fitful, strange, and moody waywardness
Which e'er confused my better spirit, to dwell
Only on moments such as these, dear friends !
—My heart no truer, but my words and ways
More true to it : as Michal, some months hence,
Will say, “this autumn was a pleasant time,”
For some few sunny days ; and overlook
Its bleak wind, hankering after pining leaves.

Autumn would fain be sunny—I would look
Liker my nature's truth; and both are frail,
And both beloved for all their frailty!

Mich.

Aureole!

Par. Drop by drop!—she is weeping like a child
Not so! I am content—more than content—
Nay Autumn wins you best by this its mute
Appeal to sympathy for its decay!
Look up, sweet Michal, nor esteem the less
Your stained and drooping vines their grapes bow down
Nor blame those creaking trees bent with their fruit,
That apple-tree with a rare after-birth

Of peeping blooms sprinkled its wealth among!
Then for the winds—what wind that ever raved
Shall vex that ash that overlooks you both,
So proud it wears its berries? Ah! at length,
The old smile meet for her, the lady of this
Sequestered nest! This kingdom, limited
Alone by one old populous green wall,
Tenanted by the ever-busy flies,
Grey crickets, and shy lizards, and quick spiders,
Each family of the silver-threaded moss—
Which, look through, near this way, and it appears
A stubble-field, or a cane-brake—a marsh
Of bulrush whitening in the sun: laugh now!
Fancy the crickets, each one in his house,
Looking out, wondering at the world—or best,
Yon painted snail, with his gay shell of dew,
Travelling to see the glossy balls high up
Hung by the caterpillar, like gold lamps!

Mich. In truth we have lived carelessly and well!

Par. And shall, my perfect pair—each, trust me, born
For the other; nay, your very hair, when mixed,
Is of one hue. For where save in this nook
Shall you two walk, when I am far away,
And wish me prosperous fortune? Stay! Whene'er
That plant shall wave its tangles lightly and softly,
As a queen's languid and imperial arm
Which scatters crowns among her loves, you
Shall be reminded to predict to me
Some great success! Ah, sec! the sun sinks broad
Behind St. Saviour's: wholly gone, at last!

Fest. Now, Aureole, stay those wandering eyes awhile!
You are ours to-night at least; and while you spoke
Of Michal and her tears, the thought came back
That none could leave what he so seemed to love:
But that last look destroys my dream—that look!
As if, where'er you gazed, there stood a star!

How far was Würzburg, with its church and spire,
And garden-walls, and all things they contain,
From that look's far alighting?

Par. I but spoke
And looked alike from simple joy, to see
The beings I love best, shut in so well
From all rude chances like to be my lot,
That, when afar, my weary spirit,—disposed
To lose awhile its care in soothing thoughts
Of them, their pleasant features, looks, and words,—
Need never hesitate, nor apprehend
Encroaching trouble may have reached them too,
Nor have recourse to Fancy's busy aid
To fashion even a wish in their behalf
Beyond what they possess already here ;
But, unobstructed, may at once forget
Itself in them, assured how well they are.
Beside, this Festus knows, he thinks me one
Whom quiet and its charms attract in vain,
One scarce aware of all the joys I quit,
Too fill'd with airy hopes to make account
Of soft delights which free hearts garner up :
Whereas, behold how much our sense of all
That's beauteous proves alike ! When Festus learns
That every common pleasure of the world
Affects me as himself; that I have just
As varied appetites for joy derived
From common things ; a stake in life, in short,
Like his ; a stake which rash pursuit of aims
That life affords not, would as soon destroy ;—
He may convince himself, that, this in view,
I shall act well advised : and last, because,
Though heaven and earth, and all things, were at stake,
Sweet Michal must not weep, our parting eve !

Fest. True : and the eve is deepening, and we sit
As little anxious to begin our talk
As though to-morrow I could open it
As we paced arm-in-arm the cheerful town
At sun-dawn ; and continue it by fits
(Old Tritheim busied with his class the while)
In that dim chamber where the noon-streaks peer
Half frightened by the awful tones around ;
And here at home unbosom all the rest
From even-blush to midnight: but, to-morrow ! . . .
Have I full leave to tell my inmost mind ?
We two were brothers, and henceforth the world
Will rise between us :—all my freest mind ?
'Tis the last night, dear Aureole !

Par. Oh, say on
 Devise some test of love—some arduousfeat
 To be performed for you—say on! If night
 Be spent the while, the better! Recall how oft
 My wondrous plans, and dreams, and hopes, and fears,
 Have—never wearied you . . . oh, no! . . . as I
 Recall, and never vividly as now,
 Your true affection, born when Einsiedeln
 And its green hills were all the world to us,
 And still increasing to this night, which ends
 My further stay at Würzburg. . . . Oh, one day
 You shall be very proud! Say on, dear friends!

Fest. In truth? 'Tis for my proper peace, indeed
 Rather than yours; for vain all projects seem
 To stay your course: I said my latest hope
 Is fading even now. A story tells
 Of some far embassy despatched to buy
 The favour of an eastern king, and how
 The gifts they offered proved but dazzling dust
 Shed from the ore-beds native to his clime:
 Just so, the value of repose and love
 I meant should tempt you, better far than I
 You seem to comprehend—and yet desist
 No whit from projects where repose nor love
 Have part.

Par. Once more? Alas! as I forebode!

Fest. A solitary briar the bank puts forth
 To save our swan's nest floating out to sea.

Par. Dear Festus, hear me. What is it you wish?
 That I should lay aside my heart's pursuit,
 Abandon the sole ends for which I live,
 Reject God's great commission—and so die!
 You bid me listen for your true love's sake:
 Yet how has grown that love? Even in a long
 And patient cherishing of the selfsame spirit
 It now would quell; as though a mother hoped
 To stay the lusty manhood of the child
 Once weak upon her knees. I was not born
 Informed and fearless from the first, but shrank
 From aught which marked me out apart from men:
 I would have lived their life, and died their death,
 Lost in their ranks, eluding destiny:
 But you first guided me through doubt and fear,
 Taught me to know mankind and know myself;
 And now that I am strong and full of hope,
 That, from my soul, I can reject all aims
 Save those your earnest words made plain to me;
 Now, that I touch the brink of my design,

When I would have a triumph in their eyes,
A glad cheer in their voices—Michal weeps,
And Festus ponders gravely!

Fest. When you deign
To hear my purpose . . .

Par. Hear it ? I can say
Beforehand all this evening's conference !
'Tis this way, Michal, that he uses : first,
Or he declares, or I, the leading points
Of our best scheme of life, what is man's end,
And what's God's will—no two faiths e'er agreed
As his with mine : next, each of us allows
Faith should be acted on as best we may :
Accordingly I venture to submit
A plan, in lack of better, for pursuing
The path which God's will seems to authorize :
Well—he discerns much good in it, avows
This motive worthy, that hope plausible,
A danger here, to be avoided—there,
An oversight to be repaired : at last
Our two minds go together—all the good
Approved by him, I gladly recognize ;
All he counts bad, I thankfully discard ;
And nought forbids my looking up at last
For some stray comfort in his cautious brow—
When, lo ! I learn that, spite of all, there lurks
Some innate and inexplicable germ
Of failure in my schemes ; so that at last
It all amounts to this—the sovereign proof
That we devote ourselves to God, is seen
In living just as though there were no God :
A life which, prompted by the sad and blind
Lusts of the world, Festus abhors the most—
But which these tenets sanctify at once ;
Though to less subtle wits it seems the same,
Consider it how they may.

Mich. Is it so, Festus ?
He speaks so calmly and kindly—is it so ?

Par. Reject those glorious visions of God's love
And man's design ; laugh loud that God should send
Vast longings to direct us ; say how soon
Power satiates these, or lust, or gold ; I know
The world's cry well, and how to answer it !
But this ambiguous warfare . . .

Fest. . . . Wearies so
That you will grant no last leave to your friend
To urge it ?—for his sake, not yours ? I wish
To send my soul in good hopes after you ;

Never to sorrow that uncertain words,
Erringly apprehended—a new creed,
Ill understood—begot rash trust in you,
And shared in your undoing.

Par. Choose your side :
Hold or renounce : but meanwhile blame me not
Because I dare to act on your own views,
Nor shrink when they point onward, nor espy
A peril where they most ensure success.

Fest. Prove that to me—but that ! Prove you abide
Within their warrant, nor presumptuous boast
God's labour laid on you ; prove, all you covet
A mortal may expect ; and, most of all,
Prove the strange course you now affect, will lead
To its attainment—and I bid you speed,
Nay, count the minutes till you venture forth !
You smile ; but I had gathered from slow thought—
Much musing on the fortunes of my friend—
Matter I deenied could not be urged in vain :
But it all leaves me at my need : in shreds
And fragments I must venture what remains.

Mich. Ask at once, Festus, wherefore he should scorn . . .
Fest. Stay, Michal : Aureole, I speak guardedly
And gravely, knowing well, whate'er your error,
This is no ill-considered choice of yours—
No sudden fancy of an ardent boy.

Not from your own confiding words alone
Am I aware your passionate heart long since
Gave birth to, nourished, and at length matures
This scheme. I will not speak of Einsiedeln,
Where I was born your elder by some years
Only to watch you fully from the first :
In all beside, our mutual tasks were fixed
Even then—'twas mine to have you in my view
As you had your own soul and those intents
Which filled it when, to crown your dearest wish,
With a tumultuous heart, you left with me
Our childhood's home to join the favoured few
Whom, here at Wurzburg, Tritheim deigns to teach
A portion of his lore : and not the best
Of those so favoured, whom you now despise,
Came earnest as you came : resolved, like you,
To grasp all, and retain all, and deserve
By patient toil a wide renown like his.
And this new ardour which supplants the old,
I watched too ; 'twas significant and strange,
In one matched to his soul's content at length
With rivals in the search for Wisdom's prize,

To see the sudden pause, the total change ;
 From contest, the transition to repose—
 From pressing onward as his fellows pressed,
 To a blank idleness ; yet most unlike
 The dull stagnation of a soul, content,
 Once foiled, to leave betimes a thriveless quest.
 That careless bearing, free from all pretence
 Even of contempt for what it ceased to seek—
 Smiling humility, praising much, yet waiving
 What it professed to praise—though not so well
 Maintained but that rare outbreaks, fierce as brief,
 Revealed the hidden scorn, as quickly curbed—
 That ostentatious show of past defeat,
 That ready acquiescence in contempt,
 I deemed no other than the letting go
 His shivered sword, of one about to spring
 Upon his foe's throat ; but it was not thus :
 Not that way looked your brooding purpose then
 For after-signs disclosed, what you confirmed,
 That you prepared to task to the uttermost
 Your strength, in furtherance of a certain aim,
 Which—while it bore the name your rivals gave
 Their own most puny efforts—was so vast
 In scope that it included their best flights,
 Combined them, and desired to gain one prize
 In place of many,—the secret of the world,
 Of man, and man's true purpose, path, and fate :
 —That you, not nursing as a mere vague dream
 This purpose, with the sages of the Past,
 Have struck upon a way to this, if all
 You trust be true, which following, heart and soul,
 You, if a man may, dare aspire to KNOW :
 And that this aim shall differ from a host
 Of aims alike in character and kind,
 Mostly in this,—to seek its own reward
 In itself only, not an alien end
 To blend therewith ; no hope, nor fear, nor joy,
 Nor woe, to elsewhere move you, but this pure
 Devotion to sustain you or betray :
 Thus you aspire.

Par. You shall not state it thus :
 I should not differ from the dreamy crew
 You speak of. I profess no other share
 In the selection of my lot, than this.
 A ready answer to the will of God
 Who summons me to be his organ : all
 Whose innate strength supports them shall succeed
 No better than your sages.

Fest. Such the aim, then.
 God sets before you : and 'tis doubtless need
 That he appoint no less the way of praise
 Than the desire to praise ; for, though I hold
 With you, the setting forth such praise to be
 The natural end and service of a man,
 And think such praise is best attained when man
 Attains the general welfare of his kind—
 Yet, this, the end, is not the instrument.
 Presume not to serve God apart from such
 Appointed channel as He wills shall gather
 Imperfect tributes—for that sole obedience
 Valued, perchance. He seeks not that his altars
 Blaze—careless how, so that they do but blaze.
 Suppose this, then : that God selected you
 To know (heed well your answers, for my faith
 Shall meet implicitly what they affirm)
 I cannot think you dare annex to such
 Selection aught beyond a steadfast will,
 An intense hope, nor let your gifts create
 Scorn or neglect of ordinary means
 Conducive to success—make destiny
 Dispense with man's endeavour. Now, dare you search
 Your inmost heart, and candidly avow
 Whether you have not rather wild desire
 For this distinction, than security
 Of its existence ; whether you discern
 The path to the fulfilment of your purpose
 Clear as that purpose—and again, that purpose
 Clear as your yearning to be singled out
 For its pursuer. Dare you answer this ?

Par. (*After a pause.*) No, I have nought to fear ! Who well
 may know

The secret'st workings of my soul. What though
 It be so ?—if indeed the strong desire
 Eclipse the aim in me ?—if splendour break
 Upon the outset of my path alone,
 And duskest shade succeed ? What fairer seal
 Shall I require to my authentic mission
 Than this fierce energy ?—this instinct striving
 Because its nature is to strive ?—enticed
 By the security of no broad course,
 With no success forever in its eyes !
 How know I else such glorious fate my own,
 But in the restless irresistible force
 That works within me ? Is it for human will
 To institute such impulses ?—still less,
 To disregard their promptings ? What should I

Do, kept among you all ; your loves, your cares,
 Your life—all to be mine ? Be sure that God
 Ne'er dooms to waste the strength He deigns impart !
 Ask the gier-eagle why she stoops at once
 Into the vast and unexplored abyss,
 What full-grown power informs her from the first,
 Why she not marvels, strenuously beating
 The silent boundless regions of the sky !
 Be sure they sleep not whom God needs ! Nor fear
 Their holding light His charge, when every hour
 That finds that charge delayed, is a new death.
 This for the faith in which I trust ; and hence
 I can abjure so well the idle arts
 These pedants strive to learn and teach ; Black Arts,
 Great Works, the Secret and Sublime, forsooth—
 Let others prize : too intimate a tie
 Connects me with our God ! A sullen fiend
 To do my bidding, fallen and hateful sprites
 To help me—what are these, at best, beside
 God helping, God directing everywhere,
 So that the earth shall yield her secrets up,
 And every object shall be charged to strike,
 Teach, gratify, her master God appoints ?
 And I am young, my Festus, happy and free !
 I can devote myself ; I have a life
 To give ; I, singled out for this, the One !
 Think, think ; the wide east, where old Wisdom sprung.
 The bright south, where she dwelt ; the hopeful north,
 All are passed o'er—it lights on me ! 'Tis time
 New hopes should animate the world, new light
 Should dawn from new revealings to a race
 Weighed down so long, forgotten so long ; so shall
 The heaven reserved for us, at last receive
 Creatures whom no unwonted splendours blind,
 But ardent to confront the unclouded blaze
 Whose beans not seldom blessed their pilgrimage,
 Not seldom glorified their life below.

Fest. My words have their old fate and make faint stand
 Against your glowing periods. Call this, truth—
 Why not pursue it in a fast retreat,
 Some one of Learning's many palaces,
 After approved example ; seeking there
 Calm converse with the great dead, soul to soul,
 Who laid up treasure with the like intent ?
 —So lift yourself into their airy place,
 And fill out full their unfulfilled careers,
 Unravelling the knots their baffled skill
 Pronounced inextricable, true !—but left

Far less confused ? A fresh eye, a fresh hand,
Might do much at their vigour's waning-point ;
Succeeding with new-breathed and earnest force,
As at old games a runner snatched the torch
From runner still : this way success might be.
But you have coupled with your enterprise
An arbitrary self-repugnant scheme
Of seeking it in strange and untried paths.
What books are in the desert ? writes the sea
The secret of her yearning in vast caves
Where yours will fall the first of human feet ?
Has Wisdom sate there and recorded aught
You press to read ? Why turn aside from her
To visit, where her vesture never glanced,
Now—solitudes consigned to barrenness
By God's decree, which who shall dare impugn ?
Now—ruins where she paused but would not stay.
Old ravaged cities that, renouncing her,
She called an endless curse on, so it came—
Or, worst of all, now—men you visit, men,
Ignoblest troops that never heard her voice,
Or hate it, men without one gift from Rome
Or Athens,—these shall Aureole's teachers be !
Rejecting past example, practice, precept,
Aidless 'mid these he thinks to stand alone :
Thick like a glory round the Stagyrite
Your rivals throng, the sages : here stand you !
Whate'er you may protest, knowledge is not
Paramount in your love ; or for her sake
You would collect all help from every source—
Rival or helper, friend, foe, all would merge
In the broad class of those who showed her haunts,
And those who showed them not.

Then I might tell more of the breath so light
Upon my eyelids, and the fingers warm
Among my hair. Youth is confused; yet never
So dull was I but, when that spirit passed,
I turned to him, scarce consciously, as turns
A water-snake when fairies cross his sleep.
And having this within me and about me
While Einsiedeln, its mountains, lakes, and woods
Confined me—what oppressive joy was mine
When life grew plain, and I first viewed the thronged,
The ever-moving concourse of mankind!
Believe that ere I joined them—ere I knew
The purpose of the pageant, or the place
Consigned to me within its ranks—while yet
Wonder was freshest and delight most pure—
'Twas then that least supportable appeared
A station with the brightest of the crowd,
A portion with the proudest of them all!
And from the tumult in my breast, this only
Could I collect—that I must thenceforth die,
Or elevate myself far, far above
The gorgeous spectacle. I seemed to long
At once to trample on, yet save mankind—
To make some unexampled sacrifice
In their behalf—to wring some wondrous good
From heaven or earth for them—to perish, winning
Eternal weal in the act: as who should dare
Pluck out the angry thunder from its cloud,
That, all its gathered flame discharged on him,
No storm might threaten summer's azure sleep:
Yet never to be mixed with men so much
As to have part even in my own work—share
In my own largess. Once the feat achieved,
I would withdraw from their officious praise,
Would gently put aside their profuse thanks.
Like some knight traversing a wilderness,
Who, on his way, may chance to free a tribe
Of desert-people from their dragon-foe;
When all the swarthy race press round to kiss
His feet, and choose him for their king, and yield
Their poor tents, pitched among the sand-hills, for
His realm; and he points, smiling, to his scarf,
Heavy with riveled gold, his burgonet,
Gay set with twinkling stones—and to the east,
Where these must be displayed!

Fest. Good : let us hear
No more about your nature, " which first shrank
" From all that marked you out apart from men ! "

Par. I touch on that ; these words but analyse
That first mad impulse—'twas as brief as fond ;
For as I gazed again upon the show,
I soon distinguished here and there a shape
Palm-wreathed and radiant, forehead and full eye.
Well pleased was I their state should thus at once
Interpret my own thoughts :—“ Behold the clue
“ To all,” I rashly said, “ and what I pine
“ To do, these have accomplished : we are peers !
“ They know, and therefore rule : I, too, will know ! ”
You were beside me, Festus, as you say ;
You saw me plunge in their pursuits whom Fame
Is lavish to attest the lords of mind ;
Not pausing to make sure the prize in view
Would satiate my cravings when obtained—
But since they strove I strove. Then came a slow
And strangling failure. We aspired alike,
Yet not the meanest plodder Trithein schools
But faced me, all-sufficient, all-content,
Or staggered only at his own strong wits ;
While I was restless, nothing satisfied,
Distrustful, most perplexed. I would slur over
That struggle ; suffice it, that I loathed myself
As weak compared with them, yet felt somehow
A mighty power was brooding, taking shape
Within me : and this lasted till one night
When, as I sate revolving it and more,
A still voice from without said —“ See'st thou not,
“ Desponding child, whence came defeat and loss ?
“ Even from thy strength. Consider : hast thou gazed
“ Presumptuously on Wisdom's countenance,
“ No veil between ; and can thy hands which falter
“ Unguided by thy brain the mighty sight
“ Continues to absorb, pursue their task
“ On earth like these around thee—what their sense
“ Which radiance ne'er distracted, clear descries ?
“ If thou wouldest share their fortune, choose their life,
“ Unfed by splendour. Let each task present
“ Its petty good to thee. Waste not thy gifts
“ In profitless waiting for the gods' descent,
“ But have some idol of thine own to dress
“ With their array. Know, not for knowing's sake,
“ But to become a star to men for ever.
“ Know, for the gain it gets, the praise it brings,
“ The wonder it inspires, the love it breeds.
“ Look one step onward, and secure that step.”
And I smiled as one never smiles but once ;
Then first discovering my own aim's extent,

Which sought to comprehend the works of God,
 And God himself, and all God's intercourse
 With the human mind ; I understood, no less,
 My fellow's studies, whose true worth I saw,
 But smiled not, well aware who stood by me.
 And softer came the voice—" There is a way—
 " 'Tis hard for flesh to tread therein, imbued
 " With frailty—hopeless, if indulgence first
 " Have ripened inborn germs of sin to strength :
 " Wilt thou adventure, for my sake and man's,
 " Apart from all reward ? " And last it breathed—
 " Be happy, my good soldier ; I am by thee
 " Be sure, even to the end ! "—I answered not,
 Knowing Him. As He spoke, I was endued
 With comprehension and a steadfast will ;
 And when He ceased, my brow was sealed His own.
 If there took place no special change in me,
 How comes it all things wore a different hue
 Thenceforward ?—pregnant with vast consequence—
 Teeming with grand results—loaded with fate ;
 So that when quailing at the mighty range
 Of secret truths which yearn for birth, I haste
 To contemplate undazzled some one truth,
 Its bearings and effects alone—at once
 What was a speck expands into a star,
 Asking a life to pass exploring thus,
 Till I near craze. I go to prove my soul !
 I see my way as birds their trackless way—
 I shall arrive ! what time, what circuit first,
 I ask not : but unless God send his hail
 Or blinding fire-balls, sleet, or stifling snow,
 In some time—his good time—I shall arrive :
 He guides me and the bird. In his good time !

Mich. Vex him no further, Festus ; it is so !

Fest. Just thus you help me ever. This would hold
 Were it the trackless air, and not a path
 Inviting you, distinct with footprints yet
 Of many a mighty spirit gone that way.
 You may have purer views than theirs, perhaps,
 But they were famous in their day—the proofs
 Remain. At least accept the light they lend.

Par. Their light ! the sum of all is briefly this :
 They laboured, and grew famous ; and the fruits
 Are best seen in a dark and groaning earth,
 Given over to a blind and endless strife
 With evils, which of all your gods abates ?
 No ; I reject and spurn them utterly,
 And all they teach. Shall I still sit beside

Their dry wells, with a white lip and filmed eye,
While in the distance heaven is blue above
Mountains where sleep the unsunned tarns ?

Fest. And yet
As strong delusions have prevailed ere now :
Men have set out as gallantly to seek
Their ruin ; I have heard of such—yourself
Avow all hitherto have failed and fallen.

Mich. Nay, Festus, when but as the pilgrims faint
Through the drear way, do you expect to see
Their city dawn afar amid the clouds ?

Par. Ay, sounds it not like some old well-known tale ?
For me, I estimate their works and them
So rightly, that at times I almost dream
I too have spent a life the sages' way,
And tread once more familiar paths. Perchance
I perished in an arrogant self-reliance
An age ago ; and in that act, a prayer
For one more chance went up so earnest, so
Instinct with better light let in by Death,
That life was blotted out—not so completely
But scattered wrecks enough of it remain,
Dim memories ; as now, when seems once more
The goal in sight again : all which, indeed,
Is foolish, and only means—the flesh I wear,
The earth I tread, are not more clear to me
Than my belief, explained to you or no.

Fest. And who am I to challenge and dispute
That clear belief ? I put away all fear.

Mich. Then Aureole is God's commissary ! he shall
Be great and grand—and all for us !

Par. No, sweet !
Not great and grand. If I can serve mankind
'Tis well—but there our intercourse must end :
I never will be served by those I serve.

Fest. Look well to this ; here is a plague-spot, here,
Disguise it how you may ! 'Tis true, you utter
This scorn while by our side and loving us ;
'Tis but a spot as yet ; but it will break
Into a hideous blotch if overlooked.
How can that course be safe which from the first
Produces carelessness to human love ?
It seems you have abjured the helps which men
Who overpass their kind, as you would do,
Have humbly sought—I dare not thoroughly probe
This matter, lest I learn too much : let be,
That popular praise would little instigate
Your efforts, nor particular approval

Reward you ; put reward aside ; alone
 You shall go forth upon your arduous task.
 None shall assist you, none partake your toil,
 None share your triumph—still you must retain
 Some one to cast your glory on, to share
 Your rapture with. Were I elect like you,
 I would encircle me with love, and raise
 A rampart of my fellows ; it should seem
 Impossible for me to fail, so watched
 By gentle friends who made my cause their own ;
 They should ward off Fate's envy—the great gift,
 Extravagant when claimed by me alone,
 Being so a gift to them as well as me.
 If danger daunted me or ease seduced,
 How calmly their sad eyes should gaze reproach !

Mich. O Aureole, can I sing when all alone,
 Without first calling, in my fancy, both
 To listen by my side—even I ! And you ?
 Do you not feel this ?—say that you feel this :

Par. I feel 'tis pleasant that my aims, at length
 Allowed their weight, should be supposed to need
 A further strengthening in these goodly helps !
 My course allures for its own sake—its sole
 Intrinsic worth ; and ne'er shall boat of mine
 Adventure forth for gold and apes at once.
 Your sages say, " if human, therefore weak : "
 If weak, more need to give myself entire
 To my pursuit ; and by its side, all else . . .
 No matter ! I deny myself but little
 In waiving all assistance save its own—
 Would there were some real sacrifice to make !
 Your friends the sages threw their joys away,
 While I must be content with keeping mine.

Fest. But do not cut yourself from human weal ?
 You cannot thrive—a man that dares affect
 To spend his life in service to his kind,
 For no reward of theirs, nor bound to them
 By any tie ; nor do so, Aureole ! No—
 There are strange punishments for such. Give up
 (Although no visible good flow thence) some part
 Of the glory to another ; hiding thus,
 Even from yourself, that all is for yourself.
 Say, say almost to God—" I have done all
 " For her—not for myself ! "

Par. And who, but lately,
 Was to rejoice in my success like you ?
 Whom should I love but both of you ?

Fest. I know not :

But know this, you, that 'tis no wish of mine
 You should abjure the lofty claims you make;
 Although I can no longer seek, indeed,
 To overlook the truth, that there will be
 A monstrous spectacle upon the earth,
 Beneath the pleasant sun, among the trees :
 —A being knowing not what love is. Hear me !
 You are endowed with faculties which bear
 Annexed to them as 'twere a dispensation
 To summon meaner spirits to do their will,
 And gather round them at their need ; inspiring
 Such with a love themselves can never feel—
 Passionless 'mid their passionate votaries.
 I know not if you joy in this or no,
 Or ever dream that common men can live
 On objects you prize lightly, but which make
 Their heart's sole treasure : the affections seem
 Beauteous at most to you, which we must taste
 Or die : and this strange quality accords,
 I know not how, with you ; sits well upon
 That luminous brow, though in another it scowls
 An eating brand—a shame. I dare not judge you :
 The rules of right and wrong thus set aside,
 There's no alternative—I own you one
 Of higher order, under other laws
 Than bind us ; therefore curb not one bold glance !
 'Tis best aspire. Once mingled with us all

Mich. Stay with us, Aureole ! cast those hopes away,
 And stay with us ! An angel warns me, too,
 Man should be humble ; you are very proud :
 And God, dethroned, has doleful plagues for such !
 He warns me not to tread a quick repulse,
 Nor slow defeat, but a complete success !
 You will find all you seek, and perish so !

Par. (after a pause). Are these the barren first fruits of my life ?

Is love like this the natural lot of all ?
 How many years of pain might one such hour
 O'erbalance ? Dearest Michal, dearest Festus,
 What shall I say, if not that I desire
 To merit this your love ; and will, dear friends,
 In swerving nothing from my first resolves.
 See, the great moon ! and ere the mottled owls
 Were wide awake, I was to go. It seems
 You acquiesce at last in all save this—
 If I am like to compass what I seek
 By the untried career I choose ; and then,
 If that career, making but small account

Of much of life's delight, will yet retain
 Sufficient to sustain my soul—for thus
 I understand these fond fears just expressed.
 And first ; the lore you praise and I neglect,
 The labours and the precepts of old time,
 I have not slightly disesteemed. But, friends,
 Truth is within ourselves ; it takes no rise
 From outward things, whate'er you may believe :
 There is an inmost centre in us all,
 Where truth abides in fulness ; and around
 Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
 This perfect, clear perception—which is truth ;
 A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
 Blinds it, and makes all error : and, “ *to know* ”
 Rather consists in opening out a way
 Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
 Than in effecting entry for a light
 Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly
 The demonstration of a truth, its birth
 And you trace back the effluence to its spring
 And source within us, where broods radiance vast
 To be elicited ray by ray, as chance
 Shall favour : chance—for hitherto, your sage
 Even as he knows not how those beams are born,
 As little knows he what unlocks their fount ;
 And men have oft grown old among their books
 To die, case-hardened in their ignorance,
 Whose careless youth had promised what long years
 Of unremitted labour ne'er performed :
 While, contrary, it has chanced some idle day,
 That autumn loiterers just as fancy-free
 As the midges in the sun, have oft given vent
 To truth—produced mysteriously as cape
 Of cloud grown out of the invisible air.
 Hence, may not truth be lodged alike in all,
 The lowest as the highest ? some slight film
 The interposing bar which binds it up,
 And makes the idiot, just as makes the sage
 Some film removed, the happy outlet whence
 Truth issues proudly ? See this soul of ours !
 How it strives weakly in the child, is loosed
 In manhood, clogged by sickness, back compelled
 By age and waste, set free at last by death :
 Why is it, flesh entralls it or enthrones ?
 What is this flesh we have to penetrate ?
 Oh, not alone when life flows still do truth
 And power emerge, but also when strange chance
 Ruffles its current ; in unused conjuncture,

When sickness breaks the body—hunger, watching,
Excess, or languor—oftenest death's approach—
Peril, deep joy, or woe. One man shall crawl
Through life, surrounded with all stirring things,
Unmoved—and he goes mad ; and from the wreck
Of what he was, by his wild talk alone,
You first collect how great a spirit he hid.
Therefore set free the soul alike in all,
Discovering the true laws by which the flesh
Bars in the spirit ! We may not be doomed
To cope with seraphs, but at least the rest
Shall cope with us. Make no more giants, God !
But elevate the race at once ! We ask
To put forth just our strength, our human strength,
All starting fairly, all equipped alike,
Gifted alike, all eagle-eyed, true-hearted—
See if we cannot beat thy angels yet !
Such is my task. I go to gather this
The sacred knowledge, here and there dispersed
About the world, long lost or never found.
And why should I be sad, or lorn of hope ?
Why ever make man's good distinct from God's ?
Or, finding they are one, why dare mistrust ?
Who shall succeed if not one pledged like me ?
Mine is no mad attempt to build a world
Apart from His, like those who set themselves
To find the nature of the spirit they bore,
And, taught betimes tha' all their gorgeous dreams
Were only born to vanish in this life,
Refused to fit them to this narrow sphere,
But chose to figure forth another world
And other frames meet for their vast desires,—
Still, all a dream ! Thus was life scorned ; but life
Shall yet be crowned : twine amaranth ! I am priest !
And all for yielding with a lively spirit
A poor existence—parting with a youth
Like theirs who squander every energy
Convertible to good, on painted toys,
Breath-bubbles, gilded dust ! And though I spurn
All adventitious aims, from empty praise
To love's award, yet whose deems such helps
Important, and concerns himself for me,
May know even these will follow with the rest—
As in the steady rolling Mayne, asleep
Yonder, is mixed its mass of schistous ore.
My own affections, laid to rest awhile,
Will waken purified, subdued alone
By all I have achieved ; till then—till then . . .

Ah ! the time-wiling loitering of a page
 Through bower and over lawn, till eve shall bring
 The stately lady's presence whom he loves—
 The broken sleep of the fisher whose rough coat
 Enwraps the queenly pearl—these are faint types !
 See how they look on me—I triumph now !
 But one thing, Festus, Michal !—I have told
 All I shall e'er disclose to mortal : say—
 Do you believe I shall accomplish this ?

Fest. I do believe !

Mich. I ever did believe !

Far. Those words shall never fade from out my brain !
 This earnest of the end shall never fade !
 Are there not, Festus, are there not, dear Michal,
 Two points in the adventure of the diver :
 One—when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge ?
 One—when, a prince, he rises with his pearl ?
 Festus, I plunge !

Fest, I wait you when you rise !

II.—PARACELSIUS ATTAINS.

SCENE.—*Constantinople.*—“ *The House of the Greek-conjuror.*”
 1521.

PARACELSIUS.

Over the waters in the vapourous west
 The sun goes down as in a sphere of gold,
 Behind the outstretched city, which between,
 With all that length of domes and minarets,
 Athwart the splendour, black and crooked runs
 Like a Turk verse along a scimetar.
 There lie, thou saddest writing, and awhile
 Relieve my aching sight. 'Tis done at last !
 Strange—and the juggles of a sallow cheat
 Could win me to this act ! 'Tis as yon cloud
 Should voyage unwreck'd o'er many a mountain-top
 And break upon a molehill. I have dared
 Come to a pause with knowledge ; scan for once
 The heights already reached, without regard
 To the extent above ; fairly compute
 What I have clearly gained ; for once excluding
 My future which should finish and fulfil
 All half-gains, and conjectures, and mere hopes—

And this, because a fortune-teller bids
 His credulous inquirers write thus much,
 Their previous life's attainment, in his book
 Before his promised secret, as he vaunts,
 Make that life perfect : here, accordingly,
 'Mid the uncouth recordings of such dupes,
 —Scrawled in like fashion, lie my life's results !

These few blurred characters suffice to note
 A stranger wandered long through many lands,
 And reaped the fruit he coveted in a few
 Discoveries, as appended here and there,
 The fragmentary produce of much toil,
 In a dim heap, fact and surmise together
 Confusedly massed, as when acquired ; himself
 Too bent on gaining more to calmly stay
 And scrutinize the little which he gained :
 Slipt in the blank space 'twixt an idiot's gibber
 And a mad lover's ditty—lies the whole !

And yet those blottings chronicle a life—
 A whole life,—mine ! No thought to turn to act,
 No problem for the fancy, but a life
 Spent and decided, wasted past recall,
 Or worthy beyond peer. Stay, turn the page
 And take its chance,—thus : what, concerning "life"
 Does this remembrancer set down ?—" We say
 " Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream."
 " Tis the mere echo of time ; and he whose heart
 " Beat first beneath a human heart, whose speech
 " Was copied from a human tongue, can never
 " Recall when he was living yet knew not this.
 " Nevertheless long seasons come and go,
 " Till some one hour's experience shows what nought,
 " He deemed, could clearer show ; and ever after
 " An altered brow, and eye, and gait, and speech
 " Attest that now he knows the adage true
 " Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream.' "

Ay, my brave chronicler, and this same time
 As well as any : let my hour speak now !

Now ! I can go no farther ; well or ill—
 'Tis done. I must desist and take my chance ;
 I cannot keep on the stretch ; 'tis no back-shrinking—
 For let the least assurance dawn, some end
 To my toil seem possible, and I proceed
 At any price, by any sacrifice :

Else, here I pause : the old Greek's prophecy
 Is like to turn out true—" I shall not quit
 " His chamber till I know what I desire ! "
 Was it the light wind sung it, o'er the sea ?

An end, a rest ! strange how the notion, once
 Admitted, gains strength every moment ! Rest !
 Where kept that thought so long ? this throbbing brow
 To cease—this beating heart to cease—its crowd
 Of gnawing thoughts to cease !—To dare let down
 My strung, so high-strung brain—to dare unnerve
 My harassed o'ertasked frame—to know my place,
 —My portion, my reward, my failure even,
 Assigned, made sure for ever !—To lose myself
 Among the common creatures of the world—
 To draw some gain from having been a man—
 Neither to hope nor fear—to live at length !
 Oh, were it but in failure, to have rest !
 What, sunk insensibly so deep ? Has all
 Been undergone for this ? Was this 'he prayer
 My labour qualified me to present
 With no fear of refusal ? Had I gone
 Carelessly through my task, and so judged fit
 To moderate my hopes ; nay, were it now
 My sole concern to exculpate myself
 And lessen punishment,—I could not choose
 An humbler mood to wait for the decree !
 No, no, there needs not this ; no, after all,
 At worst I have performed my share of the task :
 The rest is God's concern—mine, merely this,
 To know that I have obstinately held
 By my own work. The mortal whose brave foot
 Has trod, unscathed, the temple-courts so far
 That he descries at length the shrine of shrines,
 Must let no sneering of the demons' eyes,
 Whose wrath he met unquailing, follow sly
 And fasten on him, fairly past their power,
 If where he stands he dares but stay ; no, no—
 He must not stagger, faint and fall at last,
 —Knowing a charm to baffle them ; behold,
 He bares his front—a mortal ventures thus
 Serene amid the echoes, beams, and glooms !
 If he be priest henceforth, or if he wake
 The god of the place to ban and blast him there,—
 Both well ! What 's failure or success to me ?
 I have subdued my life to the one end
 Ordained life ; there alone I cannot doubt,
 That only way I may be satisfied.

Yes, well have I subdued my life ! beyond
 The obligation of my strictest vows,
 The contemplation of my wildest bond,
 Which gave, in truth, my nature freely up,
 In what it should be, more than what it was—
 Consenting that whatever passions slept
 Whatever impulses lay unmatured,
 Should wither in the gerin,—but scarce foreseeing
 That the soil, doomed thus to perpetual waste,
 Would seem one day, remembered in its youth
 Beside the parched sand-tract which now it is,
 Already strewn with faint blooms, viewless then.
 I ne'er engaged to root up loves so frail
 I felt them not ; yet now, 'tis very plain
 Some soft spots had their birth in me at first—
 If not love, say, like love : there was a tine
 When yet this wolfish hunger after knowledge
 Set not remorselessly love's claims aside ;
 This heart was human once, or why recall
 Einsiedeln, now, and Würzburg, which the Mayne
 Forsakes her course to fold as with an arm ?

And Festus—my poor Festus, with his praise,
 And counsel, and grave fears—where is he now ?
 Or the sweet maiden, long ago his bride ?
 I surely loved them—that last night, at least,
 When we . . . gone ! gone ! the better : I am saved
 The sad review of an ambitious youth,
 Choked by vile lusts, unnoticed in their birth,
 But let grow up and wind around a will
 Till action was destroyed. No, I have gone
 Purging my path successively of aught
 Wearing the distant likeness of such lusts.
 I have made life consist of one idea :
 Ere that was master—up till that was born—
 I bear a memory of a pleasant life
 Whose small events I treasure ; till one morn
 I ran o'er the seven little grassy fields,
 Startling the flocks of nameless birds, to tell
 Poor Festus, leaping all the while for joy,
 To leave all trouble to futurity,
 Since I had just determined to become
 The greatest and most glorious man on earth.
 And since that morn all life has been forgot ;
 All is one day—one only step between
 The outset and the end : one tyrant aim,
 Absorbing all, fills up the interval—
 One vast unbroken chain of thought, kept up

Through a career or friendly or opposed
 To its existence : life, death, light and shade
 The shows of the world, were bare receptacles
 Or indices of truth to be wrung thence,
 Not instruments of sorrow or delight :
 For some one truth would dimly beacon me
 From mountains rough with pines, and flit and wink
 O'er dazzling wastes of frozen snow, and tremble
 Into assured light in some branching mine,
 Where ripens, swathed in fire, the liquid gold—
 And all the beauty, all the wonder fell
 On either side the truth, as its mere robe ;
 Men saw the robe—I saw the august form.
 So far, then, I have voyaged with success,
 So much is good, then, in this working sea
 Which parts me from that happy strip of land—
 But o'er that happy strip a sun shone too !
 And fainter gleams it as the waves grow rough,
 And still more faint as the sea widens ; last
 I sicken on a dead gulph, streaked with light
 From its own putrefying depths alone !
 Then—God was pledged to take me by the hand ;
 Now—any miserable juggler bends
 My pride to him. All seems alike at length ;
 Who knows which are the wise and which the fools ?
 God may take pleasure in confounding pride
 By hiding secrets with the scorned and base—
 He who stoops lowest may find most—in short,
 I am here ; and all seems natural ; I start not :
 And never having glanced behind to know
 If I had kept my primal light from wane,
 Am thus insensibly grown—what I am !

Oh, bitter ; very bitter ! And more bitter,
 To fear a deeper curse, an inner ruin—
 Plague beneath plague—the last turning the first
 To light beside its darkness. Better weep
 My youth and its brave hopes, all dead and gone,
 In tears which burn ! Would I were sure to win
 Some startling secret in their stead !—a tincture
 Of force to flush old age with youth, or breed
 Gold, or imprison moonbeams till they change
 To opal shafts !—only that, hurling it
 Indignant back, I might convince myself
 My aims remained as ever supreme and pure !
 Even now, why not desire, for mankind's sake,
 That if I fail, some fault may be the cause,—

That, though I sink, another may succeed ?
 O God, the despicable heart of us !
 Shut out this hiedous mockery from my heart !

'Twas politic in you, Aureole, to reject
 Single rewards, and ask them in the lump ;
 At all events, once launched, to hold straight on :
 For now 'tis all or nothing. Mighty profit
 Your gains will bring if they stop short of such
 Full consummation ! As a man, you had
 A certain share of strength, and that is gone
 Already in the getting these you boast.
 Do not they seem to laugh, as who should say—
 " Great master, we are here indeed ; dragged forth
 " To light : this hast thou done ; be glad ! now, seek
 " The strength to use which thou hast spent in getting .

And yet 'tis surely much, 'tis very much,
 Thus to have emptied youth of all its gifts,
 To feed a fire meant to hold out till morn
 Arrive with inexhaustible light ; and lo,
 I have heaped up my last, and day dawns not !
 While I am left with grey hair, faded hands,
 And furrowed brow. Ha, have I, after all,
 Mistaken the wild nursling of my breast ?
 Knowledge it seemed, and Power, and Recompense !
 Was she who glided through my room of nights,—
 Who laid my head on her soft knees, and smoothed
 The damp locks,—whose sly soothings just began
 When my sick spirit craved repose awhile—
 God ! was I fighting Sleep off for Death's sake ?
 God ! Thou art Mind ! Unto the Master-Mind
 Mind should be precious. Spare my mind alone !
 All else I will endure : if, as I stand
 Here, with my gains, thy thunder smite me down,
 I bow me ; 'tis thy will, thy righteous will ;
 I o'erpass life's restrictions, and I die :
 And if no trace of my career remain,
 Save a thin corpse at pleasure of the wind
 In these bright chambers, level with the air,
 See thou to it ! But if my spirit fail,
 My once proud spirit forsake me at the last,
 Hast thou done well by me ? So do not thou !
 Crush not my mind, dear God, though I be crushed !
 Hold me before the frequence of thy seraphs,
 And say—" I crushed him, lest he should disturb
 " My law. Men must not know their strength : behold,
 " Weak and alone, how near he raised himself ! "

But if delusions trouble me—and Thou,
 Not seldom felt with rapture in thy help
 Throughout my toil and wanderings, dost intend
 To work man's welfare through my weak endeavour—
 To crown my mortal forehead with a beam
 From thine own blinding crown—to smile, and guide
 This puny hand, and let the work so framed
 Be styled my work,—hear me! I covet not
 An influx of new power, an angel's soul:
 It were no marvel then—but I have reached
 Thus far, a man; let me conclude, a man!
 Give but one hour of my first energy
 Of that invincible faith—one only hour!
 That I may cover with an eagle-glance
 The truths I have, and spy some certain way
 To mould them, and completing them, possess!

Yet God is good: I started sure of that,
 And why dispute it now? I'll not believe
 But some undoubted warning long ere this
 Had reached me: stars would write his will in heaven,
 As once when a labarum was not deemed
 Too much for the old founder of these walls.
 Then, if my life has not been natural,
 It has been monstrous: yet, till late, my course
 So ardently engrossed me, that delight,
 A pausing and reflecting joy, 'tis plain,
 Though such were meant to follow as its fruit,
 Could find no place in it. True, I am worn;
 But who clothes summer, who is Life itself?
 God, that created all things, can renew!
 And then, though after-life to please me now
 Must have no likeness to the past, what hinders
 Reward from springing out of toil, as changed
 As bursts the flower from earth, and root, and stalk?
 What use were punishment, unless some sin
 Be first detected? let me know that first!

(*Aprile, from within*)

I hear a voice, perchance I heard
 Long ago, but all too low,
 So that scarce a thought was stirred
 If really spoke the voice or no:
 I heard it in my youth, when first
 The waters of my life outburst:
 But now their stream ebbs faint, I hear
 The voice, still low, but fatal-clear—

As if all Poets, that God meant
Should save the world, and therefore lent
Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused
To do his work, or lightly used
Those gifts, or failed through weak endeavour,
And mourn, cast off by him forever,—
As if these leaned in airy ring
To call me ; this the song they sing.

“ Lost, lost ! yet come,
With our wan troop make thy home :
Come, come ! for we
Will not breathe, so much as breathe
Reproach to thee !
Knowing what thou sink’st beneath :
So we sank in those old years,
We who bid thee, come ! thou last
Who, a living man, hast life o’erpas
And all together we, thy peers,
Will pardon ask for thee, the last
Whose trial is done, whose lot is cast
With those who watch, but work no more—
Who gaze on life, but live no more :
And yet we trusted thou shouldst speak
God’s message which our lips, too weak,
Refused to utter, - shouldst redeem
Our fault : such trust, and all, a dream !
So we chose thee a bright birth-place
Where the richness ran to flowers—
Couldst not sing one song for grace ?
Nor make one blossom man’s and ours ?
Must one more recreant to his race
Die with unexerted powers,
And join us, leaving as he found
The world, he was to loosen, bound ?
Anguish ! ever and for ever ;
Still beginning, ending never !
Yet, lost and last one, come !
How couldst understand, alas,
What our pale ghosts strove to say,
As their shades did glance and pass
Before thee, night and day ?
Thou wert blind, as we were dumb :
Once more, therefore, come, O come !
How shall we better arm the spirit
Who next shall thy post of life inherit—
How guard him from thy ruin ?
Tell us of thy sad undoing

Here, where we sit, ever pursuing
 Our weary task, ever renewing
 Sharp sorrow, far from God who gave
 Our powers, and man they could not save ! ”

APRILE enters.

A spirit better armed, succeeding me ?
 Ha, ha ! our king that wouldst be, here at last ?
 Art thou the Poet who shall save the world ?
 Thy hand to mine. Stay, fix thine eyes on mine.
 Thou wouldst be king ? Still fix thine eyes on mine !
Par. Ha, ha ! why crouchest not ? Am I not king ?
 So torture is not wholly unavailing !
 Have my fierce spasms compelled thee from thy lair ?
 Art thou the Sage I only seemed to be,
 Myself of after-time, my very self
 With sight a little clearer, strength more firm,
 Who robs me of my prize and takes my place
 For just a fault, a weakness, a neglect ?
 I scarcely trusted God with the surmise
 That such might come, and thou didst hear the while !

Apr. Thine eyes are lustreless to mine ; my hair
 Is soft, nay silken soft ; to talk with thee
 Flushes my cheek, and thou art ashy-pale,
 True, thou hast laboured, hast withstood her lips,
 The siren's ! Yes, 'tis like thou hast attained !
 Tell me, dear master, wherefore now thou comest ?
 I thought thy solemn songs would have their need
 In after-time ; that I should hear the earth
 Exult in thee, and echo with thy praise,
 While I was laid forgotten in my grave.

Par. Not so ! I know thee, I am not thy dupe !
 Thou art ordained to follow in my track,
 Even as thou sayest, succeeding to my place,
 Reaping my sowing—as I scorned to reap
 The harvest sown by sages passed away.
 Thou art the sober searcher, cautious striver,
 As if, except through me, thou hadst searched or striven !
 Ay, tell the world ! Degrade me, after all,
 To an aspirant after fame, not truth—
 To all but envy of thy fate, be sure !

Apr. Nay, sing them to me ; I shall envy not :
 Thou shalt be king ! Sing thou, and I will stand
 Beside, and call deep silence for thy songs,
 And worship thee, as I had ne'er been meant
 To fill thy throne—but none shall ever know !
 Sing to me : for already thy wild eyes

Unlock my heart-springs, as some crystal-shaft
 Reveals by some chance blaze its parent fount
 After long time—so thou reveal'st my soul !
 All will flash forth at last, with thee to hear !

Par. (His secret ! my successor's secret—fool !)
 I am he that aspired to KNOW—and thou ?

Apr. I would LOVE infinitely, and be loved !

Par. Poor slave ! I am thy king indeed.

Apr. 'Thou deem'st
 That—born a spirit, dowered even as thou,
 Born for thy fate—because I could not curb
 My yearnings to possess at once the full
 Enjoyment ; yet neglected all the means
 Of realising even the frailest joy ;
 Gathering no fragiments to appease my want
 Yet nursing up that want till thus I die—
 Thou deem'st I cannot trace thy safe, sure march,
 O'er perils that o'erwhelm me, triumphing,
 Neglecting nought below for aught above.
 Despising nothing and ensuring all—
 Nor that I could (my time to come again)
 Lead thus my spirit securely as thine own
 Listen, and thou shalt see I know thee well.
 I would love infinitely . . . Ah, lost ! lost !

O ye who armed me at such cost,
 Your faces shall I bear to see
 With your gifts even yet on me ?—

Par. (Ah, 'tis some moonstruck creature after all!
 Such fond fools as are like to haunt this den :
 They spread contagion, doubtless : yet he seemed
 To echo one foreboding of my heart
 So truly, that . . . no matter ! How he stands
 With eve's last sunbeam staying on his hair
 Which turns to it, as if they were akin :
 And those clear smiling eyes of saddest blue
 Nearly set free, so far they rise above
 The painful fruitless striving of that brow
 And enforced knowledge of those lips, firm-set
 In slow despondency's eternal sigh !
 Has he, too, missed life's end, and learned the cause ?)
 Be calm, I charge thee, by thy fealty !
 Tell me what thou wouldest be, and what I am.

Apr. I would love infinitely, and be loved.
 First : I would carve in stone, or cast in brass,
 The forms of earth. No ancient hunter, raised
 Up to the gods by his renown ; no nymph
 Supposed the sweet soul of a woodland tree,
 Or sapphirine spirit of a twilight star,

Should be too hard for me ; no shepherd-king,
 Regal with his white locks ; no youth who stands
 Silent and very calm amid the throng,
 His right hand ever hid beneath his robe
 Until the tyrant pass ; no law-giver ;
 No swan-soft woman, rubbed with lucid oils
 Given by a god for love of her—too hard !
 Each passion sprung from man, conceived by man,
 Would I express and clothe it in its right form,
 Or blend with others struggling in one form,
 Or show repressed by an ungainly form.
 For, if you marvelled at some mighty spirit
 With a fit frame to execute his will—
 Ay, even unconsciously to work his will—
 You should be moved no less beside some strong,
 Rare spirit, fettered to a stubborn body
 Endeavouring to subdue it, and inform it
 With its own splendour ! All this I would do,
 And I would say, this done, “God’s sprites being made,
 “He grants to each a sphere to be its world,
 “Appointed with the various objects needed
 “To satisfy its spiritual desires ;
 “So, I create a world for these my shapes
 “Fit to sustain their beauty and their strength !”
 And, at the word, I would contrive and paint
 Woods, valleys, rocks, and plains, dells, sands, and wastes,
 Lakes which, when morn breaks on their quivering bed
 Blaze like a wyvern flying round the sun ;
 And ocean-isles so small, the dog-fish tracking
 A dead whale, who should find them, would swim thrice
 Around them, and fare onward—all to hold
 The offspring of my brain. Nor these alone—
 Bronze labyrinths, palace, pyramid, and crypt,
 Baths, galleries, courts, temples, and terraces,
 Marts, theatres, and wharfs—all filled with men !
 Men everywhere ! And this performed, in turn,
 When those who looked on, pined to hear the hopes,
 And fears, and hates, and loves which moved the crowd,—
 I would throw down the pencil as the chisel,
 And I would speak : no thought which ever stirred
 A human breast should be untold ; no passions
 No soft emotions, from the turbulent stir
 Within a heart fed with desires like mine—
 To the last comfort, shutting the tired lids
 Of him who sleeps the sultry noon away
 Beneath the tent-tree by the way-side well :
 And this in language as the need should be,
 Now poured at once forth in a burning flow

Now piled up in a grand array of words.
 This done, to perfect and consummate all,
 Even as a luminous haze links star to star,
 I would supply all chasms with music, breathing
 Mysterious notions of the soul, no way
 To be defined save in strange melodies.
 Last, having thus revealed all I could love,
 And having received all love bestowed on it,
 I would die : so preserving through my course
 God full on me, as I was full on men :
 And He would grant my prayer—" I have gone through
 " All loveliness of life ; make more for me,
 " If not for men—or take me to thyself,
 " Eternal, infinite Love ! "

If thou hast ne'er

Coneeived this mighty aim, this full desire,
 Thou hast not passed my trial, and thou art
 No king of mine.

Par.

Ah me !

Apr.

But thou art here !

Thou didst not gaze like me upon that end
 Till thine own powers for compassing the bliss
 Were blind with glory ; nor grow mad to grasp
 At once the prize long patient toil should claim ;
 Nor spurn all granted short of that. And I
 Would do as thou, a second time : nay, listen--
 Knowing ourselves, our world, our task so great,
 Our time so brief,—'tis clear if we refuse
 The means so limited, the tools so rude
 To execute our purpose, life will fleet,
 And we shall fade, and leave our task undone.
 Rather, grow wise in time : what though our work
 Be fashioned in despite of their ill-service,
 Be crippled every way ? 'Twere little praise
 Did full resources wait on our good will
 At every turn. Let all be as it is.

Some say the earth is even so contrived
 That tree, and flower, a vesture gay, conceal
 A bare and skeleton framework ; had we means
 That answered to our mind ! But now I seem
 Wrecked on a savage isle : how rear thereon
 My palace ? Branching palms the props shall be,
 Fruit glossy mingling ; gems are for the east ;
 Who heeds them ? I can waive them. Serpent's scales,
 Birds' feathers, downy furs, and fishes' skins
 Must help me ; and al little here and there
 Is all I can aspire to : still my art
 Shall show its birth was in a gentler clime.

" Had I green jars of malachite, this way
 " I'd range them : where those sea-shells glisten above,
 " Cressets should hang, by right : this way we set
 " The purple carpets, as these mats are laid,
 " Woven of mere fern and rush and blossoming flag."
 Or if, by fortune, some completer grace
 Be spared to me, some fragment, some slight sample
 Of my own land's completer workmanship,
 Some trifle little heeded there, but here
 The place's one perfection—with what joy
 Would I enshrine the relic—cheerfully
 Foregoing all the marvels out of reach !
 Could I retain one strain of all the psalm
 Of the angels—one word of the fiat of God—
 To let my followers know what such things are !
 I would adventure nobly for their sakes :
 When nights were still, and still, the moaning sea,
 And far away I could descry the land
 Whence I departed, whither I return,
 I would dispart the waves, and stand once more
 At home, and load my bark, and hasten back,
 And fling my gains before them, rich or poor—
 " Friends," I would say, " I went far, far for them,
 " Past the high rocks the haunt of doves, the mounds
 " Of red earth from whose sides strange trees grow out,
 " Past tracts of milk-white minute blinding sand,
 " Till, by a mighty moon, I tremblingly
 " Gathered these magic herbs, berry and bud,
 " In haste—not pausing to reject the weeds,
 " But happy plucking them at any price.
 " To me, who have seen them bloom in their own soil,
 " They are scarce lovely : plait and wear them, you !
 " And guess, from what they are, the springs that fed—
 " The stars that sparkled o'er them, night by night,
 " The snakes that travelled far to sip their dew !"
 Thus for my higher loves ; and thus even weakness
 Would win me honour. But not these alone
 Should claim my care ; for common life, its wants
 And ways, would I set forth in beauteous hues :
 The lowest hind should not possess a hope,
 A fear, but I'd be by him, saying better
 Than he his own heart's language. I would live
 For ever in the thoughts I thus explored,
 As a discoverer's memory is attached
 To all he finds : they should be mine henceforth,
 Imbued with me, though free to all before :
 For clay, once cast into my soul's rich mine
 Should come up crusted o'er with gems : nor this

Would need a meaner spirit than the first :
 Nay, 'twould be but the selfsame spirit, clothed
 In humbler guise, but still the selfsame spirit—
 As one spring wind unbinds the mountain snow,
 And comforts violets in their hermitage.
 But, master, poet, who hast done all this
 How didst thou 'scape the ruin I have met
 Didst thou, when nerving thee to this attempt,
 Ne'er range thy mind's extent, as some wide hall,
 Dazzled by shapes that filled its length with light,
 Shapes clustered there to rule thee, not obey—
 That will not wait thy summons, will not rise
 Singly, nor when thy practised eye and hand
 Can well transfer their loveliness, but crowd
 By thee for ever, bright to thy despair ?
 Didst thou ne'er gaze on each by turns, and ne'er
 Resolve to single out *one*, though the rest
 Should vanish, and to give that one, entire
 In beauty, to the world ; forgetting, so,
 Its peers, whose number baffles mortal power ?
 And, this determined, wert thou ne'er seduced
 By memories, and regrets, and passionate love,
 To glance once more farewell ? and did their eyes
 Fasten thee, brighter and more bright, until
 Thou couldst but stagger back unto their feet,
 And laugh that man's applause or welfare once
 Could tempt thee to forsake them ? Or when years
 Had passed, and still their love possessed thee wholly ;
 When from without some murmur startled thee
 Of darkling mortals, famished for one ray
 Of thy so-hoarded luxury of light,
 Didst thou ne'er strive even yet to break those spells,
 And prove thou couldst recover and fulfil
 Thy early mission, long ago renounced,
 And, to that end, select some shape once more ?
 And did not mist-like influences, thick films,
 Faint memories of the rest, that charmed so long
 Thine eyes, float fast, confuse thee, bear thee off,
 As whirling snow-drifts blind a man who treads
 A mountain ridge, with guiding spear, through storm ?
 Say, though I fell, I had excuse to fall ;
 Say, I was tempted sorely : say but this,
 Dear lord, Aprile's lord !

Par. Clasp me not thus,
 Aprile ! . . . That the truth should reach me thus !
 We are weak dust. Nay, clasp not, or I faint !
Apr. My king ! and envious thoughts could outrage thee !
 Lo, I forget my ruin, and rejoice

In thy success, as thou ! Let our God's praise
 Go bravely through the world at last ! What care
 Through me or thee ? I feel thy breath . . . why, tears ?
 Tears in the darkness—and from thee to me ?

Par. Love me henceforth, Aprile, while I learn
 To love ; and, merciful God, forgive us both !
 We wake at length from weary dreams ; but both
 Have slept in fairy-land : though dark and drear
 Appears the world before us, we no less
 Wake with our wrists and ankles jewelled still.
 I, too, have sought to know as thou to LOVE—
 Excluding love as thou refusedst knowledge.
 Still thou hast beauty, and I power. We wake :
 What penance canst devise for both of us ?

Apr. I hear thee faintly . . . the thick darkness ! Even
 Thine eyes are hid. 'Tis as I knew : I speak,
 And now I die. But I have seen thy face !
 O, poet, think of me, and sing of me !
 But to have seen thee, and to die so soon !

Par. Die not, Aprile : we must never part.
 Are we not halves of one dissevered world,
 Whom this strange chance unites once more ? Part ? never !
 Till thou, the lover, know ; and I, the knower,
 Love—until both are saved. Aprile, hear !
 We will accept our gains, and use them—now !
 God, he will die upon my breast ! Aprile !

Apr. To speak but once, and die ! yet by his side.
 Hush ! hush !

Ha ! go you ever girt about
 With phantoms, powers ? I have created such,
 But these seem real as I !

Par. Whom can you see
 Through the accursed darkness ?

Apr. Stay ; I know,
 I know them : who should know them well as I ?—
 White brows, lit up with glory ; poets all !

Par. Let him but live, and I have my reward !

Apr. Yes ; I see now—God is the PERFECT POET,
 Who in creation acts his own conceptions.

Shall man refuse to be aught less than God ?
 Man's weakness is his glory—for the strength
 Which raises him to heaven and near God's self,
 Came spite of it : God's strength his glory is,
 For thence came with our weakness sympathy
 Which brought God down to earth, a man like us.
 Had you but told me this at first ! . . . Hush ! hush

Par. Live ! for my sake, because of my great sin,
 To help my brain, oppressed by these wild words

And their deep import. Live ! 'tis not too late :
 I have a quiet home for us, and friends.
 Michal shall smile on you . . . Hear you ? Lean thus,
 And breathe my breath : I shall not lose one word
 Of all your speech—no little word, Aprile !

Apr. No, no . . . Crown me ? I am not one of you !
 'Tis he, the king, you seek. I am not one . . .

Par. Give me thy spirit, at least ! Let me love too !

I have attained, and now I may depart.

III.—PARACELSIUS.

SCENE—*A chamber in the house of Paracelsus at Basil. 1526.*

PARACELSIUS, FESTUS.

Par. Heap logs, and let the blaze laugh out !

Fest. True, true !

'Tis very fit that all, time, chance, and change
 Have wrought since last we sate thus, face to face,
 And soul to soul—all cares, far-looking fears,
 Vague apprehensions, all vain fancies bred
 By your long absense, should be cast away,
 Forgotten in this glad unhop'd renewal
 Of our affections.

Par. Oh, omit not aught
 Which witnesses your own and Michal's love !
 I bade you not spare that ! Forget alone
 The honours and the glories, and the rest,
 You seem disposed to tell profusely out.

Fest. Nay, even your honours, in a sense, I waive
 The wondrous Paracelsus—Life's dispenser,
 Fate's commissary, idol of the schools,
 And Courts, shall be no more than Aureole still—
 Still Aureole and my friend, as when we parted
 Some twenty years ago, and I restrained
 As I best could the promptings of my spirit,
 Which secretly advanced you, from the first,
 To the pre-eminent rank which, since, your own
 Adventurous ardour, nobly triumphing,
 Has won for you.

Par. Yes, yes ; and Michal's face
 Still wears that quiet and peculiar light,
 Like the dim circlet floating round a pearl ?

Fest. Just so.

Par. And yet her calm sweet countenance,
Though saintly, was not sad ; for she would sing
Alone . . . Does she still sing alone, bird-like,
Not dreaming you are near ? Her carols dropt
In flakes through that old leafy bower built under
The sunny wall at Würzburg, from her lattice
Among the trees above, while I, unseen,
Sate conning some rare scroll from Tritheim's shelves,
Much wondering notes so simple could divert
My mind from study. Those were happy days !
Respect all such as sing when all alone.

Fest. Scarcely alone—her children, you may guess,
Are wild beside her . . .

Par. Ah, those children quite
Unsettle the pure picture in my mind :
A girl—she was so perfect, so distinct . . .
No change, no change ! Not but this added grace
May blend and harmonize with its compeers,
And Michal may become her motherhood ;
But 'tis a change—and I detest all change,
And most a change in aught I loved long since !
So, Michal . . . you have said she thinks of me ?

Fest. O very proud will Michal be of you !
Imagine how we sate, long winter-nights
Scheming and wondering—shaping your presumed
Adventures, or devising their reward ;
Shutting out fear with all the strength of hope.
Though it was strange how, even when most secure
In our domestic peace, a certain dim
And flitting shade could sadden all ; it seemed
A restlessness of heart, a silent yearning,
A sense of something wanting, incomplete—
Not to be put in words, perhaps avoided
By mute consent—but, said or unsaid, felt
To point to one so loved and so long lost.
And then the hopes rose and shut out the fears—
How you would laugh should I recount them now !
I still predicted your return at last,
With gifts beyond the greatest vaunt of all,
All Tritheim's wondrous troop ; did one of whien
Attain renown by any chance, I smiled—
As well aware of who would prove his peer.
Michal was sure some woman long ere this,
As beautiful as you were sage, had loved . . .

Par. Far-seeing, truly, to discern so much
In the fantastic projects and day-dreams
Of a raw, restless boy !

Fest. Say, one whose sunrise
 Well warranted our faith in this full noon !
 Can I forget the anxious voice which said,
 " Festus, have thoughts like these e'er shaped themselves
 " In other brains than mine—have their possessors
 " Existed in like circumstance—were they weak
 " As I—or ever constant from the first,
 " Despising youth's allurements, and rejecting
 " As spider-films the shackles I endure ?
 " Is there hope for me ?"—and I answered grave
 As an acknowledged elder, calmer, wiser,
 More gifted mortal. O you must remember,
 For all your glorious . . .

Par. Glorious ? ay, this hair,
 These hands—nay, touch them, they are mine ! Recall
 With all the said recallings, times when thus
 To lay them by your own ne'er turned you pale,
 As now. Most glorious, are they not ?

Fest. Why . . . why . . .
 Something must be subtracted from success
 So wide, no doubt. He would be scrupulous, truly,
 Who should object such drawbacks. Still, still, Aureole,
 You are changed—very changed ! 'Twere losing nothing
 To look well to it : you must not be stolen
 From the enjoyment of your well-won need.

Par. My friend ! you seek my pleasure, past a doubt :
 By talking, not of me, but of yourself,
 You will best gain your point.

Fest. Have I not said
 All touching Michal and my children ? Sure
 You know, by this, full well how Aunchen looks
 Gravely, while one disparts her thick brown hair ;
 And Aureole's glee when some stray gannet builds
 Amid the birch-trees by the lake. Small hope
 Have I that he will honour, the wild imp.
 His namesake ! Sigh not ! 'tis too much to ask
 That all we love should reach the same proud fate.
 But you are very kind to humour me
 By showing interest in my quiet life ;
 You, who of old could never tame yourself
 To tranquil pleasures, must at heart despise . . .

Par. Festus, strange secrets are let out by Death,
 Who blabs so oft the follies of this world :
 And I am Death's familiar, as you know.
 I helped a man to die, some few weeks since,
 Warped even from his go-cart to one end—
 The living on princes' smiles, reflected from
 A mighty herd of favourites. No mean trick

He left untried ; and truly well nigh wormed
 All traces of God's finger out of him.
 Then died, grown old ; and just an hour before—
 Having lain long with blank and soulless eyes—
 He sate up suddenly, and with natural voice
 Said, that in spite of thick air and closed doors
 God told him it was June ; and he knew well,
 Without such telling, harebells grew in June ;
 And all that kings could ever give or take
 Would not be precious as those blooms to him.
 Just so, allowing I am passing wise,
 It seems to me much worthier argument
 Why pansies,* eyes that laugh, bear beauty's prize
 From violets, eyes that dream—(your Michal's choice)—
 Than all fools find to wonder at in me,
 Or in my fortunes : and be very sure
 I say this from no prurient restlessness—
 No self-complacency—itching to turn,
 Vary, and view its pleasure from all points,
 And, in this matter, willing other men
 Should argue and demonstrate to itself
 The realness of the very joy it tastes.
 What joy is better than the news of friends
 Whose memories were a solace to me oft,
 As mountain-baths to wild-fowls in their flight ?
 Yes, oster than you wasted thought on me
 If you were sage, and rightly valued bliss !
 But there 's no taming nor repressing hearts :
 God knows I need such !—So you heard me speak ?

Fest. Speak ? when ?

Par. When but this morning at my class ?
 There was noise and crowd enough. I saw you not.
 Surely you know I am engaged to fill
 The chair here ?—that 'tis part of my proud fate
 To lecture to as many thick-sculled youths
 As please, each day, to throng the theatre,
 To my great reputation, and no small
 Danger of Basil's benches, long unused
 To crack beneath such honour ?

Fest.

I was there ;

I mingled with the throng : shall I avow
 I had small care to listen ?—too intent
 On gathering from the murnaurs of the crowd
 A full corroboration of my hopes !
 What can I learn about your powers ? but they
 Know, care for nought beyond your actual state—

Your actual value ; and yet worship you !
Those various natures whom you sway as one !
But ere I go, be sure I shall attend . . .

Par. Stop, o' God's name : the thing's by no means yet
Past remedy ! Shall I read this morning's work
—At least in substance ? Nought so worth the gaining
As an apt scholar ! Thus, then, with all due
Precision and emphasis—(you, besides, are clearly
Guiltless of understanding a whit more
The subject than your stool—allowed to be
A notable advantage) . . .

Fest. Surely, Aureole,
You laugh at me!

Par. I laugh ? Ha, ha ! thank Heaven,
I charge you, if 't be so ! for I forget
Much—and what laughter should be like ! No less,
However, I forego that luxury,
Since it alarms the friend who brings it back.
True, laughter like my own must echo strange
To thinking men ; a smile were better far—
So make me smile ! If the exulting look
You wore but now be smiling, 'tis so long
Since I have smiled ! Alas, such smiles are born
Alone of hearts like yours, or shepherds old
Of ancient time, whose eyes, calm as their flocks,
Saw in the stars mere garnishry of heaven,
In earth a stage for altars, nothing more.
Never change, Festus : I say, never change !

Fest. My God, if he be wretched after all!

Fest. My God, if he be wretched after all?
Par. When last we parted, Festus, you declared,
—Or did your Michal's soft lips whisper words
I have preserved? She told me she believed
I should succeed (meaning, that in the search
I then engaged in, I should meet success),
And yet be wretched: now, she augured false.

Fest. Thank Heaven ! but you spoke strangely ! could I
venture
To think bare apprehension lest your friend,
Dazzled by your resplendent course, might find
Henceforth less sweetness in his own, awakes
Such earnest mood in you ? Fear not, dear friend,
That I shall leave you, inwardly repining
Your lot was not my own !

Par. And this, for ever !
For ever ! gull who may, they will be blind !
They will not look nor think—'tis nothing new
In them ; but surely he is not of them !
My Festus, do you know, I reckoned, you—

Though all beside were sand-blind—you, my friend,
 Would look at me, once close, with piercing eye,
 Untroubled by the false glare that confounds
 A weaker vision; would remain serene,
 Though singular, amid a gaping throng.
 I feared you, or had come, sure, long ere this,
 To Einsiedeln. Well, error has no end
 And Rhasis is a sage, and Basil boasts
 A tribe of wits, and I am wise and blest
 Past all disporto! 'Tis vain to fret at it.
 I have vowed long since that my worshippers
 Shall owe to their own deep sagacity
 All further information, good or bad
 And little risk my reputation runs,
 Unless perchance the glance now searching me
 Be fixed much longer—for it seems to spell,
 Dimly, the characters a simpler man
 Might read distinct enough. Old eastern books
 Say, the fallen prince of morning some short space
 Remained unchanged in feature—nay, his brow
 Seemed hued with triumph: every spirit then
 Praising; *his* heart on flame the while:—a tale!
 Well, Festus, what discover you, I pray?

Fest. Some foul deed sullies then a life which else
 Were raised supreme?

Par. Good: I do well—most well!
 Why strive to make men hear, feel, fret themselves
 With what 'tis past their power to comprehend?
 I would not strive now: only, having nursed
 The faint surmise that one yet walked the earth,
 One, at least, not the utter fool of show,
 Not absolutely formed to be the dupe
 Of shallow plausibilities alone;
 One who, in youth found wise enough to choose
 The happiness his riper years approve,
 Was yet so anxious for another's sake,
 That, ere his friend could rush upon a course
 Mad, ruinous, the converse of his own,
 His gentler spirit essayed, prejudged for him
 The perilous path, foresaw its destiny,
 And warned the weak one in such tender words,
 Such accents—his whole heart in every tone—
 That oft their memory comforted that friend
 When rather it should have increased despair:
 —Having believed, I say, that this one man
 Could never lose the wisdom from the first
 His portion—how should I refuse to grieve
 At even my gain if it attest his loss,

At triumph which so signally disturbs
Our old relation, proving me more wise ?
Therefore, once more reminding him how well
He prophesied, I note the single flaw
That spoils his prophet's title : in plain words
You were deceived, and thus were you deceived—
I have not been successful, and yet am
Most wretched ; there—'tis said at last ; but give
No credit, lest you force me to concede
That common sense yet lives upon the earth.

Fest. You surely do not mean to banter me ?

Par. You know, or (if you have been wise enough
To cleanse your memory of such matters) knew,
As far as words of mine could make it clear,
That 'twas my purpose to find joy or grief
Solely in the fulfilment of my plan,
Or plot, or whatsoe'er it was ; rejoicing
Alone as it proceeded prosperously,
Sorrowing alone when any chance retarded
Its progress. That was in those Würzburg days !
Not to prolong a theme I thoroughly hate,
I have pursued this plan with all my strength
And having failed therein most signally,
Cannot object to ruin, utter and drear
As all-excelling would have been the prize
Had fortune favoured me. I scarce do right
To vex your frank good spirit, late rejoiced
By my supposed prosperity, I know,
And, were I lucky in a glut of friends
Would well agree to let your error live,
Nay, strengthen it with fables of success :
But mine is no condition to refuse
The transient solace of so rare a chance,
My solitary luxury, my Festus—
Accordingly I venture to put off
The wearisome vest of falsehood galling me,
Secure when he is by. I lay me bare,
Prone at his mercy—but he is my friend !
Not that he needs retain his aspect grave ;
That answers not my purpose ; for 'tis like,
Some sunny morning—Basil being drained
Of its wise population, every corner
Of the amphitheatre crammed with learned clerks,
Here Ecolainpadius, looking worlds of wit,
Here Castellanus, as profound as he,
Munsterus here, Frobenius there,—all squeezed,
And staring, and expectant,—then, I say,
'Tis like that the poor zany of the show,

Your friend, will choose to put his trappings off
 Before them, bid adieu to cap and bells
 And motley with a grace but seldom judged
 Expedient in such cases :—the grim smile
 That will go round ! Is it not therefore best
 To venture a rehearsal like the present
 In a small way ? Where are the signs I seek,
 The first-fruits and fair sample of the scorn
 Due to all quacks ? Why, this will never do !

Fest. These are foul vapours, Aureole ; nought beside !
 The effect of watching, study, weariness.
 Were there a spark of truth in the confusion
 Of these wild words, you would not outrage thus
 Your youth's companion. I shall ne'er regard
 These wanderings, bred of faintness and much study.
 You would not trust a trouble thus to me,
 To Michal's friend.

Par. I have said it, dearest Festus !
 The manner is ungracious, probably ;
 More may be told in broken sobs, one day,
 And scalding tears, ere long : but I thought best
 To keep that off as long as possible.
 Do you wonder still ?

Fest. No ; it must oft fall out
 That one whose labour perfects any work,
 Shall rise from it with eye so worn, that he
 Of all men least can measure the extent
 Of what he has accomplished. He alone,
 Who, nothing tasked, is nothing weary too,
 Can clearly scan the little he effects :
 But we, the bystanders, untouched by toil,
 Estimate each aright.

Par. This worthy Festus
 Is one of them, at last ! 'Tis so with all !
 First, they set down all progress as a dream,
 And next, when he, whose quick discomfiture
 Was counted on, accomplishes some few
 And doubtful steps in his career,—behold,
 They look for every inch of ground to vanish
 Beneath his tread, so sure they judge success !

Fest. Few doubtful steps ? when death retires before
 Your presence—when the noblest of mankind,
 Broken in body, or subdued in mind,
 May through your skill renew their vigour, raise
 The shattered frame to pristine stateliness ?
 When men in racking pain may purchase dreams
 Of what delights them most—swooning at once
 Into a sea of bliss, or rapt alon

As in a flying sphere of turbulent light ?
 When we may look to you as one ordained
 To free the flesh from fell disease, as frees
 Our Luther's burning tongue the fettered soul ?
 When . . .

Par. Rather, when and where, friend, did you get
 This notable news ?

I'cest. Even from the common voice ;
 From those whose envy, daring not dispute
 The wonders it decries, attributes them
 To magie and such folly.

Par. Folly ? Why not
 To magie, pray ? You find a comfort doubtless
 In holding, God ne'er troubles him about
 Us or our doings : once we were judged worth
 The devil's tempting . . . I offend : forgive me,
 And rest content. Your prophecy on the whole
 Was fair enough as prophesyings go ;
 At fault a little in detail, but quite
 Precise enough in the main ; accordingly
 I pay due homage : you guessed long ago
 (The prophet !) I should fail—and I have failed.

I'cest. You mean to tell me, then, the hopes which fed
 Your youth have not been realised as yet ?
 Some obstacle has barred them hitherto ?
 Or that their innate . . .

Par. As I said but now,
 You have a very decent prophet's fame
 So you but shun details here. Little matters
 Whether those hopes were mad,—the aims they sought,
 Safe and secure from all ambitious fools ;
 Or whether my weak wits are overcome
 By what a better spirit would scorn : I fail.
 And now methinks 'twere best to change a theme,
 I am a sad fool to have stumbled on.
 I say confusedly what comes uppermost ;
 But there are times when patience proves at fault,
 As now : this morning's strange encounter—you
 Beside me once again ! you, whom I guessed
 Alive, since hitherto (with Luther's leave)
 No friend have I among the saints at rest,
 To judge by any good their prayers effect—
 I knew you would have helped me !—So would He,
 My strange competitor in enterprise,
 Bound for the same end by another path
 Arrived, or ill or well, before the time,
 At our disastrous journey's doubtful close—
 How goes it with Aprile ? Ah, your heaven

Receives not into its beatitudes
 Mero martyrs for the world's sake ; heaven shuts fast :
 The poor mad poet is howling by this time !
 Since you are my sole friend then, here or there,
 I could not quite repress the varied feelings
 This meeting wakens ; they have had their vent,
 And now forget them. Do the rear-mice still
 Hang like a fret-work on the gate (or what
 In my time was a gate) fronting the road
 From Einsiedeln to Lachen ?

Fest.

Trifle not !

Answer me—for my sake alone. You smiled
 Just now, when I supposed some deed, unworthy
 Yourself, might blot the else so bright result ;
 Yet if your motives have continued pure,
 Your earnest will unfaltering, if you still
 Remain unchanged, and if, in spite of this,
 You have experienced a defeat that proves
 Your aims for ever unattainable—
 I say not, you would cheerfully resign
 The contest—mortal hearts are not so fashioned—
 But sure you would resign it, ne'ertheless.
 You sought not fame, nor gain, nor even love ;
 No end distinct from knowledge,—I repeat
 Your very words : once satisfied that knowledge
 Is a mere dream, you would announce as much,
 Yourself the first. But how is the event ?
 You are defeated—and I find you here !

Par. As though “hero” did not signify defeat !
 I spoke not of my little labours here—
 But of the break-down of my general aims :
 That you, aware of their extent and scope,
 Should look on these sage lecturings, approved
 By beardless boys, and bearded dotards,—these
 As a fit consummation of such aims,
 Is worthy notice ! A professorship
 At Basil ! Since you see so much in it,
 And think my life was reasonably drained
 Of life's delights to render me a match
 For duties arduous as such post demands,—
 Far be it from me to deny my power
 To fill the petty circle lotted out
 From infinite space, or justify the host
 Of honours thence accruing : so, take notice,
 This jewel dangling from my neck preserves
 The features of a prince, my skill restored
 To plague his people some few years to come :
 And all through a pure whim. He had eased the earth

For me, but that the droll despair which seized
 The vermin of his household, tickled me.
 I came to see : here, drivelled the physician,
 Whose most infallible nostrum was at fault ;
 There quaked the astrologer, whose horoscopo
 Had promised him interminable years ;
 Here a monk fumbled at the sick man's mouth
 With some undoubted relic—a sudary
 Of the Virgin ; while some other dozen knaves
 Of the same brotherhood (he loved them ever)
 Were actively preparing 'neath his nose
 Such a suffumigation as, once fired,
 Had stunk the patient dead ere he could groan.
 I cursed the doctor, and upset the brother ;
 Brushed past the conjurer ; vowed that the first gust
 Of stench from the ingredients just alight
 Would raise a cross-grained devil in my sword,
 Not easily laid ; and ere an hour, the prince
 Slept as he never slept since priuce he was.
 A day—and I was posting for my life,
 Placarded through the town as one whose spite
 Had near availed to stop the blessed effects
 Of the doctor's nostrum, which, well seconded
 By the sudary, and most by the costly smoke—
 Not leaving out the strenuous prayers sent up
 Hard by, in the abbey—raised the prince to life ;
 To the great reputation of the seer,
 Who, confident, expected all along
 The glad event—the doctor's recompense—
 Much largess from his highness to the monks—
 And the vast solace of his loving people,
 Whose general satisfaction to increase,
 The prince was pleased no longer to defer
 The burning of some dozen heretics,
 Remanded 'till God's mercy should be shown
 Touching his sickness, as a prudent pledge
 To make it surer : last of all were joined
 Ample directions to all loyal folk
 To swell the complement, by seizing me
 Who—doubtless some rank sorcerer—had endeavoured
 To thwart these pious offices, obstruct
 The prince's cure, and frustrate Heaven, by help
 Of certain devils dwelling in his sword.
 By luck, the prince in his first fit of thanks
 Had forced this bauble on me as an earnest
 Of further favours. This one case may serve
 To give sufficient taste of many such,
 So let them pass : those shelves support a pile

Of patents, licenses, diplomas, titles,
 From Germany, France, Spain, and Italy :
 They authorise some honour : ne'ertheless,
 I set more store by this Erasmus sent ;
 He trusts me ; our Frobenius is his friend,
 And him "I raised" (nay, read it) "from the dead" . . .
 I weary you, I see ; I merely sought
 To show, there's no great wonder after all
 That while I fill the class-room, and attract
 A crowd to Basil, I get leave to stay ;
 And therefore need not scruple to accept
 The utmost they can offer—if I please :
 For 'tis but right the world should be prepared
 To treat with favour e'en fantastic wants
 Of one like me, used up in serving her.
 Just as the mortal, whom the Gods in part
 Devoured, received in place of his lost limb
 Some virtue or other—cured disease, I think.—
 You mind the fables we have read together.

Fest. You do not think I comprehend a word :
 The time was, Aureole, you were apt enough
 To clothe the airiest thoughts in specious breath ;
 But surely you must feel how vague and strange
 These speeches sound.

Par. Well, then : you know my hopes ;
 I am assured, at length, those hopes were vain ;
 That truth is just as far from me as ever ;
 That I have thrown my life away ; that sorrow
 On that account is vain, and further effort
 To mend and patch what's marr'd beyond repairing,
 As useless : and all this was taught to me
 By the convincing, good old-fashioned method
 Of force—by sheer compulsion. Is that plain ?

Fest. Dear Aureole ! you confess my fears were just ?
 God wills not . . .

Par. Now, 'tis this I most admire—
 The constant talk men of your stamp keep up
 Of God's will, as they style it ; one would swear
 Man had but merely to uplift his eye,
 To see the will in question charactered
 On the heaven's vault. 'Tis hardly wise to moot
 Such topics : doubts are many and faith is weak.
 I know as much of any will of God's,
 As knows some dumb and tortured brute what Man,
 His stern lord, wills from the perplexing blows
 That plague him every way, and there, of course,
 Where least he suffers, longest he remains—
 My case ; and for such reasons I plod on,

Subdued, but not convinced. I know as little
 Why I deserve to fail, as why I hoped
 Better things in my youth. I simply know
 I am no master here, but traine¹ and beaten
 Into the path I tread ; and here I stay,
 Until some further intimation reach me,
 Like an obedient drudge : though I prefer
 To view the whole thing as a task imposed,
 Which, whether dull or pleasant, must be done--
 Yet, I deny not, there is made provision
 Of joys which tastes less jaded might affect ;
 Nay, some which please me too, for all my pride
 Pleasures that once were pains : the iron ring
 Festering about a slave's neck grows at length
 Part of the flesh it eats I hate no more
 A host of pretty, vile delights, undreamed of
 Or spurned, before ; such now supply the place
 Of my dead aims : as in the autumn woods
 Where tall trees used to flourish, from their roots
 Springs up a fungous brood, sickly and pale,
 Chill mushrooms, coloured like a corpse's cheek.

Fest. If I interpret well what words I seize,
 It troubles me but little that your aims,
 Vast in their dawning, and most likely grown
 Extravagantly since, have baffled you.
 Perchance I am glad ; you merit greater praise ;
 Because they are too glorious to be gained,
 You do not blindly cling to them and die
 You fell, but have not sullenly refused
 To rise, because an angel worsted you
 In wrestling, though the world holds not your peer
 And though too harsh and sudden is the change
 To yield content as yet—still, you pursue
 The ungracious path as though 'twere rosy-strewn.
 'Tis well : and your reward, or soon or late,
 Will come from Him whom no man serves in vain.

Par. Ah, very fine ! For my part, I conceive
 The very pausing from all further toil,
 Which you find heinous, would be as a seal
 To the sincerity of all my deeds.
 To be consistent I should die at once ;
 I calculated on no after-life ;
 Yet (how crept in, how fostered, I know not)
 Here am I with as passionate regret
 For youth, and health, and love so vainly lost,
 As if their preservation had been first
 And foremost in my thoughts : and this strange fact
 Humbled me wondrously, and had due force

In rendering me the more disposed to follow
 A certain counsel, a mysterious warning --
 You will not understand-- but 'twas a man
 With aims not mine, but yet pursued like mine,
 With the same fervour and no more success,
 Who perished in my sight; but summoned me
 As I would shun the ghastly fate I saw,
 To serve my race at once; to wait no longer
 'Till God should interfere in my behalf,
 And let the next world's knowledge dawn on this;
 But to distrust myself, put pride away,
 And give my gains, imperfect as they were,
 To men. I have not leisure to explain
 How since, a strange succession of events
 Has raised me to the station you behold,
 Wherein I seem to turn to most account
 The mere wreck of the past,—perhaps receive
 Some feeble glimmering token that God views
 And may approve my penance: therefore here
 You find me—doing most good or least harm:
 And if folks wonder much and profit little
 'Tis not my fault; only, I shall rejoice
 When my part in the farce is shuffled through,
 And the curtain falls; I must hold out 'till then.

Fest. Till when, dear Aureole ?

Par. 'Till I'm fairly thrust

From my proud eminence. Fortune is fickle
 And even professors fall: should that arrive,
 I see no sin in ceding to my bent.
 You little fancy what rude shocks apprise us;
 We sin: God's intimations rather fail
 In clearness than in energy: 'twere well
 Did they but indicate the course to take
 Like that to be forsaken. I would fain
 Be spared a further sample! Here I stand,
 And here I stay, be sure, till forced to flit.

Fest. Remain but firm on that head; long ere then
 All I expect will come to pass, I trust:
 The cloud that wraps you will have disappeared.
 Meantime, I see small chance of such event:
 They praise you here as one whose lore, divulged
 Already, eclipses all the past can show,
 But whose achievements, marvellous as they be,
 Are faint anticipations of a glory
 About to be revealed. When Basil's crowds
 Dismiss their teacher, I shall be content
 That he depart.

Par: This favour at their hands

I look for earlier than your view of things
Would warrant. Of the crowd you saw to-day
Remove the full half sheer amazement draws,
The novelty, nought else ; and next, the tribe
Whose innate blockish dulness just perceives
That unless miracles (as seem my works)
Be wrought in their behalf, their chance is slight
To puzzle the devil ; next, the numerous set
Who bitterly hate established schools, so help
The teacher that oppugns them, and o'erthrows,
'Till having planted his own doctrine, he
May reckon on their rancour in his turn ;
Take, too, the sprinkling of sagacious knaves
Whose cunning runs not counter to the vogue,
But seeks, by flattery and nursing craft,
To force my system to a premature
Short-lived development . . . Why swell the list ?
Each has his end to serve, and his best way
Of serving it : remove all these, remains
A scantling—a poor dozen at the best—
That really come to learn for learning's sake ;
Worthy to look for sympathy and service,
And likely to draw profit from my pains.

Fest. 'Tis no encouraging picture: still these few
Redeem their fellows. Once implant the germ,
Its growth, if slow, is sure.

Par. God grant it so !
I would make some amends : but if I fail,
The luckless rogues have this excuse to urge,
That much is in my method and my maimer,
My uncouth habits, my impatient spirit,
Which hinders of reception and result
My doctrine : much to say, small skill to speak !
Those old aims suffered not a looking-off,
Though for an instant ; therefore, only when
 thus renounced them and resolved to reap
Some present fruit—to teach mankind some truth
So dearly purchased—only then I found
Such teaching was an art requiring cares
And qualities peculiar to itself ;
That to possess was one thing—to display,
Another. Had renown been in my thoughts,
Or popular praise, I had soon discovered it !
One grows but little apt to learn these things.

Fest. If it be so, which nowise I believe,
There needs no waiting fuller dispensation
To leave a labour to so little use :
Why not throw up the irksome charge at once ?

Par. A task, a task! . . .

But wherefore hide from you

The whole extent of degradation, once
 Engaged in the confession? Spite of all
 My fine talk of obedience, and repugnance,
 Docility, and what not, 'tis yet to learn
 If when the old task really is performed,
 And my will free once more, to choose a new,
 I shall do aught but slightly modify
 The nature of the hated one I quit.
 In plain words, I am spoiled: my life still tends
 As first it tended. I am broken and trained
 To my old habits; they are part of me.
 I know, and none so well, my darling ends
 Are proved impossible: no less, no less
 Even now what humours me, fond fool, as when
 Their faint ghosts sit with me, and flatter me,
 And send me back content to my dull round?
 How can I change this soul?—this apparatus
 Constructed solely for their purposes
 So well adapted to their every want,
 To search out and discover, prove and perfect;
 This intricate machine, whose most minute,
 Least obvious motions have their charm to me
 Though to none else—an aptitude I seize,
 An object I perceive, a use, a meaning
 A property, a fitness, I explain,
 And I alone:—how can I change my soul?
 And this wronged body, worthless save when tasked
 Under that soul's dominion—used to care
 For its bright master's cures, and quite subdue
 Its proper cravings—not to ail, nor pine,
 So the soul prosper—whither drag this poor,
 Tried, patient body? God! how I essayed,
 To live like that mad poet, for a while,
 To catch Aprile's spirit, as I hoped,
 And love alone! and how I felt too warped
 And twisted and deformed! What should I do,
 Even tho' released from drudgery, but return
 Faint, as you see, and halting, blind and sore,
 To my old life—and die as I began!
 I cannot feed on beauty, for the sake
 Of beauty only; nor can drink in balm
 From lovely objects for their loveliness;
 My nature cannot lose her first intent;
 I still must hoard, and heap, and class all truths
 With one ulterior purpose: I must know!
 Would God translate me to his throne, believe

That I should only listen to his words
 To further my own aims ! For other men,
 Beauty is prodigally strewn around,
 And I were happy could I quench as they
 This mad and thriveless longing, be content
 With beauty for itself alone : alas !
 I have addressed a frock of heavy mail,
 Yet may not join the troop of sacred knights ;
 And now the forest-creatures fly from me,
 The grass-banks cool, the sunbeams warm no more !
 Best follow, dreaming that ere night arrives
 I shall o'ertake the company, and ride
 Glittering as they !

Fest. I think I apprehend
 What you would say : if you, in truth, design
 To enter once more on the life thus left,
 Seek not to hide that all this consciousness
 Of failure is assumed.

Par. My friend, my friend,
 I speak, you listen ; I explain, perhaps
 You understand : there our communion ends.
 Have you learnt nothing from to-day's discourse ?
 When we would thoroughly know the sick man's state
 We feel awhile the fluttering pulse, press soft
 The hot brow, look upon the languid eye,
 And thence divine the rest. Must I lay bare
 My heart, hideous and beating, or tear up
 My vitals for your gaze, ere you will deem
 Enough made known ? You ! who are you, forsooth ?
 That is the crowning operation claimed
 By the arch-demonstrator - heaven the hall,
 And earth the audience. Let Aprile and you
 Secure good places — 'twill be worth your while.

Fest. Are you mad, Aureole ? What can I have said
 To call for this ? I judged from your own words.

Par. Oh, true ! A fevered wretch describes the ape
 That mocks him from the bed-foot, and you turn
 All gravely thither at once : or he recounts
 The perilous journey he has late performed,
 And you are puzzled much how that could be !
 You find me here, half stupid and half mad :
 It makes no part of my delight to search
 Into these things, much less to undergo
 Another's scrutiny ; but so it chances
 That I am led to trust my state to you :
 And the event is, you combine, contrast,
 And ponder on my foolish words, as though
 They thoroughly conveyed all hidden here—

Here, loathsome with despair, and hate, and rage !
 Is there no fear, no shrinking, or no shame ?
 Will you guess nothing ? will you spare me nothing ?
 Must I go deeper ? Aye or no ?

Fest.

Dear friend . . .

Par. True : I am brutal—'tis a part of it ;
 The plague's sign—you are not a lazarus-haunter,
 How should you know ? Well then, you think it strange
 I should profess to have failed utterly,
 And yet propose an ultimate return
 To courses void of hope : and this, because
 You know not what temptation is, nor how
 'Tis like to ply men in the sickliest part.
 You are to understand, that we who make
 Sport for the gods, are hunted to the end :
 There is not one sharp volley shot at us,
 Which if we manage to escape with life,
 Though touched and hurt, we straight may slacken pace
 And gather by the way-side herbs and roots
 To staunch our wounds, secure from further harm—
 No ; we are chased to life's extremest verge.
 It will be well indeed if I return,
 A harmless busy fool, to my old ways !
 I would forget hints of another fate,
 Significant enough, which silent hours
 Have lately scared me with.

Fest.

Another ! and what ?

Par. After all, Festus, you say well : I stand
 A man yet—I need never humble me.
 I would have been—something, I know not what ;
 But though I cannot soar, I do not crawl :
 There are worse portions than this one of mine ;
 You say well !

Fest.

Ah ! . . .

Par.

And deeper degradation !

If the mean stimulants of vulgar praise,
 And vanity, should become the chosen food
 Of a sunk mind ; should stifle even the wish
 To find its early aspirations true ;
 Should teach it to breatho falsehood like life-breath—
 An atmosphere of craft, and trick, and lies ;
 Should make it proud to circulate or surpass
 Base natures in the practices which woke
 Its most indignant loathing once . . . No, no !
 Utter damnation is reserved for Hell !
 I had immortal feelings—such shall never
 Be wholly quenched—no, no !

My friend, you wear

A melancholy face, and, truth to speak,
There's little cheer in all this dismal work ;
But 'twas not my desire to set abroad
Such memories and forebodings. I foresaw
Where they would drive ; 'twere better you details
News of Lucerne or Zurich ; or I described
Great Egypt's flaring sky, or Spain's cork-groves.

Fest. I have thought now : yes, this mood will pass away.
I know you, and the lofty spirit you bear,
And easily ravel out a clue to all.
These are the trials meet for such as you,
Nor must you hope exemption : to be mortal
Is to be plied with trials manifold.
Look round ! The obstacles which kept the rest
Of men from your ambition, you have spurned ;
Their fears, their doubts, the chains that bind them best,
Were flax before your resolute soul, which nought
Avails to awe, save these delusions, bred
From its own strength, its selfsame strength, disguised—
Mocking itself. Be brave, dear Aureole ! Since
The rabbit has his shade to frighten him,
The fawn his rustling bough, mortals their cares,
And higher natures yet their power to laugh
At these entangling fantasies, as you
At trammels of a weaker intellect.
Measure your mind's height by the shade it casts !
I know you.

Par. And I know you, dearest Festus !
And how you love unworthily ; and how
All admiration renders blind.

Fest. You hold
That admiration blinds ?

Par. Aye, and alas !
Fest. Nought blinds you less than admiration will
Whether it be that all love renders wise
In its degree ; from love which blends with love—
Heart answering heart—to love which spends itself
In silent mad idolatry of some
Pre-eminent mortal, some great soul of souls,
Which ne'er will know how well it is adored :—
I say, such love is never blind ; but rather,
Alive to every the minutest spot
Which mars its object, and which hate (supposed
So vigilant and searching) dreams not of :
Love broods on such : what then ? When first perceived
Is there no sweet strife to forget, to change,
To overflush those blemishes with all
The glow of general goodness they disturb ?

—To make those very defects an endless source
 Of new affection grown from hopes and fears ?
 And, when all fails, is there no gallant stand
 Made even for much proved weak ? no shrinking-back
 Lest, rising even as its idol sinks,
 It nearly reach the sacred place, and stand
 Almost a rival of that idol ? Trust me,
 If there be fiends who seek to work our hurt,
 To ruin and drag down earth's mightiest spirits,
 Even at God's foot, 'twill be from such as love,
 Their zeal will gather most to serve their cause ;
 And least from those who hate, who most essay
 By contumely and scorn to blot the light
 Which will have entrance even to their hearts ;
 For thence will our Defender tear the veil
 And show within each heart, as in a shrine,
 The giant image of Perfection, grown
 In hate's despite, whose calumnies were spawned
 In the untroubled presence of its eyes !
 True admiration blinds not ; nor am I
 So blind : I call your sin exceptional ;
 It springs from one whose life has passed the bounds
 Prescribed to life. Compound that fault with God !
 I speak of men ; to common men like me
 The weakness you confess endears you more—
 Like the far traces of decay in suns.
 I bid you have good cheer !

Par.

Præclarè ! Optimè !
 Think of a quiet mountain-cloister'd priest
 Instructing Paracelsus ! yet, 'tis so.
 Come, I will show you where my merit lies.
 'Tis in the advance of individual minds
 That the slow crowd should ground their expectation
 Eventually to follow - as the sea
 Waits ages in its bed, 'till some one wave
 Out of the multitude aspires, extends
 The empire of the whole, some feet perhaps,
 Over the strip of sand which could confine
 Its fellows so long a time : thenceforth the rest,
 Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,
 And so much is clear gained. I shall be glad
 If all my labours, failing of aught else,
 Suffice to make such inroad, and procure
 A wider range for thought : nay, they do this ;
 For, whatso'er my notions of true knowledge
 And a legitimate success, may be,
 I am not blind to my undoubted rank
 When classed with others : I precede my age :

And whoso wills, is very free to mount
 These labours as a platform, whence their own
 May have a prosperous outset : but, alas !
 My followers—they are noisy as you heard,
 But for intelligence—the best of them
 So clumsily wield the weapons I supply
 And they extol, that I begin to doubt
 Whether their own rude clubs and pebble-stones
 Would not do better service than my arms
 Thus vilely swayed—if error will not fall
 Sooner before the old awkward batterings
 Than my more subtle warfare, not half learned.

Fest. I would supply that art, then, and withhold
 Its arms until you have taught their mystery.

Par. Content you, 'tis my wish ; I have recourse
 To the simplest training. Day by day I seek
 To wake the mood, the spirit which alone
 Can make those arms of any use to men
 Of course, they are for swaggering forth at once
 Graced with Ulysses' club, Achilles' shield—
 Flash on us, all in armour, thou Achilles !
 Make our hearts dance to thy resounding step
 A proper sight to scare the crows away !

Fest. Pity you choose not, then, some other method
 Of coming at your point. The marvellous art
 At length established in the world bids fair
 To remedy all hindrances like these :
 Trust to Frobenius' press the precious lore
 Obscured by uncouth manner, or unfit
 For raw beginners ; let his types secur
 A deathless monument to after-times ;
 Meanwhile wait confidently and enjoy
 The ultimate effect : sooner or later,
 You shall be all-revealed.

Par. The old dull question
 In a new form ; no more. Thus : I possess
 Two sorts of knowledge ; one, —vast, shadowy,
 Hints of the unbounded aim I once pursued :
 The other consists of many secrets, learned
 While bent on nobler prize,—perhaps a few
 First principles which may conduct to much :
 These last I offer to my followers here.
 Now bid me chronicle the first of these,
 My ancient study, and in effect you bid me
 Revert to the wild courses just abjured :
 I must go find them scattered through the world.
 Then, for the principles, they are so simple
 (Being chiefly of the overturning sort),

That one time is as proper to propound them
 As any other—to-morrow at my class,
 Or half a century hence embalmed in print :
 For if mankind intend to learn at all,
 They must begin by giving faith to them,
 And acting on them ; and I do not see
 But that my lectures serve indifferent well :
 No doubt these dogmas fall not to the earth,
 For all their novelty and rugged setting.
 I think my class will not forget the day
 I let them know the gods of Israel,
 Aëtius, Oribasius, Galen, Rhasis,
 Serapion, Avicenna, Averroes,—
 Were blocks !

Fest. And that reminds me, I heard something
 About your waywardness : you burned their books,
 It seems, instead of answering those sages.

Par. And who said that ?

Fest. Some I met yesternight
 With Ecolampadius. As you know, the purpose
 Of this short stay at Basil was to learn
 His pleasure touching certain missives sent
 For our Zuinglius and himself. 'Twas he
 Apprized me that the famous teacher hero
 Was my old friend.

Par. Ah, I forgot : you went . . .

Fest. From Zurich with advices for the ear
 Of Luther, now at Wittenburg—(you know,
 I make no doubt, the differences of late
 With Carolostadius)—and returning sought
 Basil and . . .

Par. I remember. He re 's a case, now,
 Will teach you why I answer not, but burn
 The books you mention : pray, does Luther dream
 His arguments convince by their own force
 The crowds that own his doctrine ? No, indeed :
 His plain denial of established points
 Ages had sanctified and men supposed
 Could never be oppugned while earth was under
 And heaven above them—points which chance, or time
 Affected not—did more than the array
 Of argument which followed. Boldly deny !
 There is much breath-stopping, hair-stiffening
 Awhile ; then, amazed glances, mute awaiting
 The thunderbolt which does not come ; and next,
 Reproachful wonder and inquiry : those
 Who else had never stirred, are able now
 To find the rest out for themselves—perhaps

To outstrip him who set the whole at work,
—As never will my wise class its instructor.
And you saw Luther?

Fest. 'Tis a wondrous soul!

Par. True: the so-heavy chain which galled mankin
Is shattered, and the noblest of us all
Must bow to the deliverer—nay, the worker
Of our own projects—we who long before
Had burst its trammels, but forgot the crowd,
We shôuld have taught, still groaned beneath the load:
This he has done and nobly. Speed that may!
Whatever be my chance or my despair,
What benefits mankind must glad me too:
And men seem made, though not as I believed,
For something better than the times produce:
Witness these gangs of peasants your new lights
From Suabia have possessed, whom Munzer leads,
And whom the duke, the landgrave, and the elector
Will calm in blood! Well, well—'tis not my world

Fest. Hark!

Par. 'Tis the melancholy wind astir
Within the trees; the embers too are grey,
Morn must be near.

Fest. Best ope the easement . see,
The night, late strewn with clouds and flying stars,
Is blank and motionless: how peaceful sleep
The tree-tops all together! Like an asp,
The wind slips whispering from bough to bough.

Par. Ay; you would gaze on a wind shaken-tree
By the hour, nor count time lost.

Fest. So you shall gaze:
Those happy times will come again . . .

Par. Gone! gone!
Those pleasant times! Does not the moaning wind
Seem to bewail that we have gained such gains
And bartered sleep for them?

Fest. It is our trust
That there is yet another world to mend
All error and mischance.

Par. Another world!
And why this world, this common world, to be
A make-shift, a mere foil, how fair soever,
To some fine life to come? Men must be fed
With angels' food, forsooth; and some few traces
Of a diviner nature which look out
Through his corporeal baseness, warrant him
In a supreme contempt for all provision
For his inferior tastes—some straggling marks

Which constitute his essence, just as truly
 As here and there a gem would constitute
 The rock, their barren bed, a diamond.
 But were it so—were man all mind—he gains
 A station little enviable. From God
 Down to the lowest spirit ministrant,
 Intelligence exists which casts our mind
 Into immeasurable shade. No, no :
 Love, hope, fear, faith—these make humanity
 These are its sign, and note, and character ;
 And these I have lost !—gone, shut from me for ever,
 Like a dead friend, safe from unkindness more !
 See morn at length. The heavy darkness seems
 Diluted ; grey and clear without the stars !
 The shrubs bestir and rouse themselves, as if
 Some snake, that weighed them down all night, let go
 His hold ; and from the east, fuller and fuller
 Day, like a mighty river, is flowing in ;
 But clouded, wintry, desolate, and cold :
 Yet see how that broad, prickly, star-shaped plant,
 Half down in the crevice, spreads its woolly leaves,
 All thick and glistening with diamond dew.
 And you depart for Finsiedeln this day :
 And we have spent all night in talk like this !
 If you would have me better for your love,
 Revert no more to these sad themes.

Pest. One favour,
 And I have done. I leave you, deeply moved ;
 Unwilling to have fared so well, the while
 My friend has changed so sorely : if this mood
 Shall pass away—if light once more arise
 Where all is darkness now—if you see fit
 To hope, and trust again, and strive again ;
 You will remember—not our love alone—
 But that my faith in God's desire for man
 To trust on his support, (as I must think
 You trusted,) is obscured and dim through you ;
 For you are thus, and this is no reward.
 Will you not call me to your side, dear friend ?

IV.—PARACELSIUS ASPIRES.

SCENE.—*A House at Colmar, in Alsatia.* 1528.

PARACELSIUS, FESTUS.

*Par. (To John Oporinus, his secretary.) Sic itur ad asta
Dear Von Visenburg*

Is scandalised, and poor Torinus paralysed,
And every honest soul that Basil holds
Aghast ; and yet we live, as one may say,
Just as though Liechtenfels had never set
So true a value on his sorry carcass,
And learned that Pütter had not frowned us dumb.
We live ; and shall as surely start to-morrow
For Nuremberg, as we drink speedy seathie
To Basil in this mantling wine, suffused
With a delicate blush—no fainter tinge is born
I' th' shut heart of a bud : pledge me, good John—
“ Basil ; a hot plague ravage it, with Putter
“ To stop the plague ! ” Even so ? Do you too share
Their panic—the reptiles ? Ha, ha ! faint through them,
Desist for them ! —while means enough exist
To bow the stoutest braggart of the tribe
Once more in cronching silence—means to breed
A stupid wonder in each fool again,
Now big with admiration at the skill
Which stript a vain pretender of his plumes ;
And, that done, means to brand each slavish brow
So deeply, surely, ineffaceably,
That thenceforth flattery shall not pucker it
Out of the furrow of that hideous stamp
Which shows the next they fawn on, what they are,
This Basil with its magnates one and all,
Whom I curse soul and limb. And now dispatch,
Dispatch, my trusty John ; and what remains
To do, whate'er arrangements for our trip
Are yet to be completed, see you hasten
This night ; we 'll weather the storm at least : to-morrow
For Nuremberg ! Now leave us ; this grave clerk
Has divers weighty matters for my ear, (*Oporinus goes out*)
And spare my lungs. At last, my gallant Festus,
I am rid of this arch-knave that follows me

As a gaunt crow a gasping sheep ; at last
 May give a loose to my delight. How kind,
 How very kind, my first, best, only friend !
 Why this looks like fidelity. Embrace me :
 Not a hair silvered yet ! Right : you shall live
 Till I am worth your love ; you shall be proud,
 And I—but let time show. Did you not wonder ?
 I sent to you because our compact weighed
 Upon my conscience—(you recall the night
 At Basil, which the gods confound)—because
 Once more I aspire ! I call you to my side ;
 You come. You thought my message strange ?

Fest.

So strange

That I must hope, indeed, your messenger
 Has mingled his own fancies with the words
 Purporting to be yours.

Par.

He said no more,

'Tis probable, than the precious folks I leave
 Said fifty-fold more roughly. Well-a-day,
 'Tis true ; poor Paracelsus is exposed
 At last ; a most egregious quack he proves,
 And those he overreached must spit their hate
 On one who, utterly beneath contempt,
 Could yet deceive their topping wits. You heard
 Bare truth ; and at my bidding you come hero
 To speed me on my enterprise, as once
 Your lavish wishes sped me, my own friend ?

Fest. What is your purpose, Aureole ?*Par.*

Oh, for purpose,

There is no lack of precedents in a case
 Like mine ; at least, if not precisely mine,
 The case of men cast off by those they sought
 To benefit . . .

Fest.

They really cast you off ?

I only heard a vague tale of some priest,
 Cured by your skill, who wrangled at your claim,
 Knowing his life's worth best ; and how the judge
 The matter was referred to, saw no cause
 To interfere, nor you to hide your full
 Contempt of him ; nor he, again, to smother
 His wrath thereat, which raised so fierce a flame
 That Basil soon was made no place for you.

Par.

The affair of Liechtenfels ? the shallowest cause,
 The last and silliest outrage—mere pretence !
 I knew it, I foretold it from the first,
 How soon the stupid wonder you mistook
 For genuine loyalty—a cheering promise
 Of better things to come—would pall and pass ;

And every word comes true. Saul is among
The prophets ! Just so long as I was pleased
To play off the mere marvels of my art—
Fantastic gambols leading to no end—
I got huge praise ; but one can ne'er keep down
Our foolish nature's weakness : there they flocked,
Poor devils, jostling, swearing, and perspiring,
Till the walls rang again ; and all for me !
I had a kindness for them, which was right ;
But then I stopped not till I tacked to that
A trust in them and a respect—a sort
Of sympathy for them : I must needs begin
To teach them, not amaze them ; “ to impart
“ The spirit which should instigate the search
“ Of truth : ” just what you bade me ! I spoke out.
Forthwith a mighty squadron, in disgust,
Filed off—“ the sifted chaff of the sack,” I said,
Redoubling my endeavours to secure
The rest ; when lo ! one man had stayed thus long
Only to ascertain if I supported
This tenet of his, or that ; another loved
To hear impartially before he judged,
And having heard, now judged ; this bland disciple
Passed for my dupe, but all along, it seems,
Spied error where his neighbours marvelling most :
That fiery doctor who had hailed me friend,
Did it because my bye-paths, once proved wrong
And beacons proper, would commend again
The good old ways our sires jogged safely o'er,
Though not their squeamish sons ; the other worthy
Discovered divers verses of St. John,
Which, read successively, refreshed the soul,
But, muttered backwards, cured the gout, the stone,
The cholic, and what not :—*quid multa !* The end
Was a clear class-room, with a quiet leer
From grave folk, and a sour reproachful glance
From those in chief, who, cap in hand, installed
The new professor scarce a year before ;
And a vast flourish about patient merit
Obscured awhile by flashy tricks, but sure
Sooner or later to emerge in splendour—
Of which the example was some luckless wight
Whom my arrival had discomfited,
But now, it seems, the general voice recalled
To fill my chair, and so efface the stain
Basil had long incurred. I sought no better—
Nought but a quiet dismissal from my post ;
While from my heart I wished them better suited,

And better served. Good night to Basil, then !
 But fast as I proposed to rid the tribe
 Of my obnoxious back, I could not spare them
 The pleasure of a parting kick.

Fest. You smile :
 Despise them as they merit !

Par. If I smile,
 'Tis with as very contempt as ever turned
 Flesh into stone : this courteous recompense !
 This grateful . . . Festus, were your nature fit
 To be defiled, your eyes the eyes to ache
 At gangrened blotches, eating poisonous blains,
 The ulcered barky scurf of leprosy
 Which finds—a man, and leaves—a hideous thing
 That cannot but be mended by hell fire,
 —I say that, could you see as I could show,
 I would lay bare to you these human hearts
 Which God cursed long ago, and devils make since
 Their pet nest and their never-tiring home.
 O, sages have discovered we are born
 For various ends—to love, to know : has ever
 One stumbled, in his search, on any signs
 Of a nature in him formed to hate ? To hate ?
 If that be our true object which evokes
 Our powers in fullest strength, be sure 'tis hate !

Fest. But I have yet to learn your purpose, Aureole !

Par. What purpose were the fittest now for me ?
 Decide ! To sink beneath such ponderous shame—
 To shrink up like a crushed snail—undergo
 In silence and desist from further toil,
 And so subside into a monument
 Of one their censure blasted ; or to bow
 Cheerfully as submissively—to lower
 My old pretensions even as Basil dictates—
 To drop into the rank her wits assign me,
 And live as they prescribe, and make that use
 Of my poor knowledge which their rules allow—
 Proud to be patted now and then, and careful
 To practise the true posture for receiving
 The amplest benefit from their hoofs' appliance,
 When they shall condescend to tutor me.
 Then one may feel resentment like a flame,
 Prompting to deck false systems in Truth's garb,
 And tangle and entwine mankind with error,
 And give them darkness for a dower, and falsehood
 For a possession : or one may niope away
 Into a shade through thinking ; or else drowso
 Into a dreamless sleep, and so die off :

But I, but I—now Festus shall divine !
 —Am merely setting out in life once more,
 Embracing my old aims ! What thinks he now ?

Fest. Your aims? the aims?—to know? and where is found
 The early trust . . .

Par. Nay, not so fast; I say,
 The aims—not the old means. You know what made me
 A laughing-stock; I was a fool; you know
 The when and the how: hardly those means again!
 Not but they had their beauty—who should know
 Their passing beauty, if not I? But still
 They were dreamis, so let them vanish: yet in beauty,
 If that may be. Stay—thus they pass in song!

(He sings.)

Heap cassia, sandal-buds, and stripes
 Of labdanum, and aloe-balls
 Smear'd with dull nard an Indian wipes
 From out her hair: (such balsam falls
 Down sea-side mountain pedestals,
 From sunnits where tired winds are fain,
 Spent with the vast and howling main,
 To treasure half their island-gain.)

And strew faint sweetness from some old
 Egyptian's fine worin-eaten shroud,
 Which breaks to dust when once unrolled;
 And shred dim perfume, like a cloud
 From chamber long to quiet vowed,
 With mothed and dropping arras hung,
 Mouldering the lute and books among
 Of queen, long dead, who lived there young.

Mine, every word!—and on such pile shall die
 My lovely fancies, with fair perished things,
 Themselves fair and forgotten; yes, forgotten,
 Or why abjure them? So I made this rhyme
 That fitting dignity might be preserved:
 No little proud was I; though the list of drugs
 Smacks of my old vocation, and the verse
 Halts like the best of Luther's psalms!

Fest. But, Aureole,
 Talk not thus wildly and madly. I am here—
 Did you know all, indeed! I have travelled far
 To learn your wishes. Be yourself again!
 For in this mood I recognize you less
 Than in the horrible despondency
 I witnessed last. You may account this, joy;

But rather let me gaze on that despair
 Than hear these incoherent words, and see
 This flushed cheek and intensely-sparkling eye !

Par. Why, man, I was light-hearted in my prime,
 I am light-hearted now ; what would you have ?
 Aprile was a poet, I make songs —
 'Tis the very augury of success I want :
 Why should I not be joyous now as then ?

Fest. Joyous ! and how ? and what remains for joy ?
 You have declared the ends (which I am sick
 Of naming) are impracticable.

Par. Ay,
 Pursued as I pursued them — the arch-fool !
 Listen : my plan will please you not, 'tis like ;
 But you are little versed in the world's ways.
 This is my plan — (first drinking its good luck) —
 I will accept all helps ; all I despised
 So rashly at the outset, equally
 With early impulses, late years have quenched :
 I have tried each way singly — now for both !
 All helps — no one sort shall exclude the rest.
 I seek to know and to enjoy at once,
 Not one without the other as before.
 Suppose my labour should seem God's own cause
 Once more, as first I dreamed, it shall not balk me
 Of the meanest, earthliest, sensuallest delight
 That may be snatched ; for every joy is gain,
 And why spurn gain, however small ? My soul
 Can die then, nor be taunted "what was gained ?"
 Nor, on the other hand, if pleasure meets me
 As though I had not spurned her hitherto,
 Shall she o'ercloud my spirit's rapt communion
 With the tumultuous past, the teeming future,
 Glorious with visions of a full success !

Fest. Success !

Par. And wherefore not ? Why not prefer
 Results obtained in my best state of being,
 To those derived alone from seasons dark
 As the thoughts they bred ? When I was best — my youth
 Unwasted — seemed success not surest too ?
 It is the nature of darkness to obscure.
 I am a wanderer : I remember well
 One journey, how I feared the track was missed,
 So long the city I desired to reach
 Lay hid ; when suddenly its spires afar
 Flashed through the circling clouds ; conceive my joy !
 Too soon the vapours closed o'er it again,
 But I had seen the city, and one such glance

No darkness could obscuro : nor shall the present
 A few dull hours, a passing shame or two,
 Destroy the vivid memories of the past.
 I will fight the battle out ! —a little tired,
 Perhaps—
 But still an able combatant'.
 You look at my grey hair and furrowed brow ?
 But I can turn even weakness to account :
 Of many tricks I know, 'tis not the least
 To push the ruins of my frame, whereon
 The fire of vigour trembles scarce alive,
 Into a heap, and send the flame aloft !
 What should I do with age ? so sickness lends
 An aid ; it being, I fear, the source of all
 We boast of : mind is nothing but disease,
 And natural health is ignorance.

Fest.

I see

But one good symptom in this notable plan :
 I feared your sudden journey had in view
 To wreak immediate vengeance on your foes ;
 'Tis not so : I am glad.

Par.

And if I pleased

To spit on them, to trample them, what then ?
 'Tis sorry warfare truly, but the fools
 Provoke it : I had spared their self-conceit,
 But if they must provoke me --cannot suffer
 Forbearance on my part—if I may keep
 No quality in the shade, must needs put forth
 Power to match power, my strength against their strength,
 And teach them their own game with their own arms—
 Why be it so, and let them take their chance !

I am above them like a God—in vain
 To hide the fact—what idle scruples, then,
 Were those that ever bade me soften it,
 Communicate it gently to the world,
 Instead of proving my supremacy,
 Taking my natural station o'er their heads,
 Then owning all the glory was a man's,
 And in my elevation man's would be !

But live and learn, though life's short ; learning, hard !
 Still, one thing I have learned—not to despair :
 And therefore, though the wreck of my past self,
 I fear, dear Pütter, that your lecture-room
 Must wait awhile for its best ornament,
 The penitent empiric, who set up
 For somebody, but soon was taught his place—
 Now, but too happy to be let confess
 His error, snuff the candles, and illustrate
(Fiat experientia corpore vili)

Your medicine's soundness in his person. Wait,
Good Pütter !

Fest. He who sneers thus, is a God !

Par. Ay, ay, laugh at me ! I am very glad
You are not gulled by all this swaggering ; you
Can see the root of the matter !—how I strive
To put a good face on the overthrow
I have experienced, and to bury and hide
My degradation in its length and breadth ;
How the mean motives I would make you think
Just mingle as is due with nobler aims,
The appetites I modestly allow
May influence me—as I am mortal still—
Do goad me, drive me on, and fast supplant
My youth's desires : you are no stupid dupe ;
You find me out ! Yes, I had sent for you
To palm these childish lies upon you, Festus !
Laugh—you shall laugh at me !

Fest. The past, then, Aureole,

Proves nothing ? Is our interchange of love
Yet to begin ? Have I to swear I mean
No flattery in this speech or that ? For you,
Whate'er you say, there is no degradation,
These low thoughts are no inmates of your mind ;
Or wherefore this disorder ? You are vexed
As much by the intrusion of base views,
Familiar to your adversaries, as they
Were troubled should your qualities alight
Amid their murky souls : not otherwise,
A stray wolf which the winter forces down
From our bleak hills, suffices to affright
A village in the vales—while foresters
Sleep calm though all night long the fanned troops
Snuff round and scratch against their crazy huts :
These evil thoughts are monsters, and will flee.

Par. May you be happy, Festus, my own friend !

Fest. Nay, further ; the delights you fain would think
The superseders of your nobler aims,
Though ordinary and harmless stimulants,
Will ne'er content you . . .

Par. Hush ! I once despised them,
But that soon passes : we are high at first
In our demands, nor will abate a jot
Of toil's strict value ; but time passes o'er,
And humbler spirits accept what we refuse ;
In short, when some such comfort is doled out
As these delights, we cannot long retain
The bitter contempt which urges us at first

To hurl it back, but hug it to our breast
And thankfully retire. This life of mine
Must be lived out, and a grave thoroughly earned :
I am just fit for that and nought beside
I told you once, I cannot now Enjoy,
Unless I deem my knowledge gains through joy ;
Nor can I Know, but straight warm tears reveal
My need of linking also joy to knowledge :
So on I drive—enjoying all I can,
And knowing all I can. I speak, of course,
Confusedly ; this will better explain —feel here !
Quick beating, is it not ? —a fire of the heart
To work off someway, this as well as any !
So, Festus sees me fairly launched ; his calm
Compassionate look might have disturbed me once,
But now, far from rejecting, I invite
What bids me press the closer, lay myself
Open before him, and be soothed with pity ;
And hope, if he command hope ; and believe
As he directs me—satiating myself
With his enduring love : and Festus quits me
To give place to some credulous disciple
Who holds that God is wise, but Paracelsus
Has his peculiar merits. I suck in
That homage, chuckle o'er that admiration,
And then dismiss the fool ; for night is come,
And I betake myself to study again,
Till patient searchings after hidden lore
Half wring some bright truth from its prison ; my frame
Trembles, my forehead's veins swell out, my hair
Tingles for triumph ! Slow and sure the morn
Shall break on my pent room, and dwindling lamp,
And furnace dead, and scattered earths and ores,
When, with a failing heart and throbbing brow,
I must review my captured truth, sum up
Its value, trace what ends to what begins,
Its present power with its eventual bearings,
Latent affinities, the views it opens,
And its full length in perfecting my scheme ;
I view it sternly circumscribed, cast down
From the high place my fond hopes yielded it,
Proved worthless — which, in getting, yet had cost
Another wrench to this fast-falling frame ;
Then, quick, the cup to quaff, that chases sorrow !
I lapse back into youth, and take again
Mere hopes of bliss for proofs that bliss will be,
—My fluttering pulse, for evidence that God
Means good to me, will make my cause his own ;

See ! I have cast off this remorseless care
 Which clogged a spirit born to soar so free,
 And my dim chamber has become a tent,
 Festus is sitting by me, and his Michal . . .
 Why do you start ? I say, she listening here,
 (For yonder's Würzburg through the orchard-boughs)
 Motions as though such ardent words should find
 No echo in a maiden's quiet soul,
 But her pure bosom heaves, her eyes fill fast
 With tears, her sweet lips tremble all the while !
 Ha, ha !

Fest. It seems, then, you expect to reap
 No unreal joy from this your present course,
 But rather . . .

Patr. Death ! To die ! I owe that much
 To what, at least, I was. I should be sad
 To live contented after such a fall—
 To thrive and fatten after such reverse !
 The whole plan is a makeshift, but will last
 My time.

Fest. And you have never mused and said,
 " I had a noble purpose, and full strength
 " To compass it ; but I have stopped half-way,
 " And wrongly give the first-fruits of my toil
 " To objects little worthy of the gift :
 " Why linger round them still ? why clinch my fault ?
 " Why seek for consolation in defeat—
 " In vain endeavours to derive a beauty
 " From ugliness ? why seek to make the most
 " Of what no power can change, nor strive instead
 " With mighty effort to redeem the past,
 " And, gathering up the treasures thus cast down,
 " To hold a steadfast course 'till I arrive
 " At their fit destination, and my own ? "
 You have never pondered thus ?

Par. Have I, you ask ?
 Often at midnight, when most fancies come,
 Would some such airy project visit me :
 But ever at the end . . . or will you hear
 The same thing in a tale, a parable ?
 It cannot prove more tedious ; listen then !
 You and I, wandering over the world wide,
 Chance to set foot upon a desert coast :
 Just as we cry, " No human voice before
 Broke the inveterate silence of these rocks ! "
 —Their querulous echo startles us ; we turn :
 What ravaged structure still looks o'er the sea ?
 Some characters remain too ! While we read.

The sharp, salt wind, impatient for the last
 Of even this record, wistfully comes and goes,
 Or sings what we recover, mocking it.
 This is the record ; and my voice, the wind's.

(He sings.)

Over the sea our galleys went,
 With cleaving prows in order brave,
 To a speeding wind and a bounding wave—

A gallant armament :

Each bark built out of a forest-tree,

Left leafy and rough as first it grew,
 And nailed all over the gaping sides,
 Within and without, with black-bull hides,
 Seethed in fat and suppled in flame,
 To bear the playful billows' game ;
 So each good ship was rude to see,
 Rude and bare to the outward view,

But each upbore a stately tent ;

Where cedar-pales in scented row
 Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine
 And an awning drooped the mast below,
 In fold on fold of the purple fine,
 That neither noontide, nor star-shine,
 Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,

Might pierce the regal tenement.

When the sun dawned, oh, gay and glad
 We set the sail and plied the oar ;
 But when the night-wind blew like breath,
 For joy of one day's voyage more,
 We sang together on the wide sea,
 Like men at peace on a peaceful shore ;
 Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,
 Each helm made sure by the twilight star,
 And in a sleep as calm as death,
 We, the strangers from afar,

Lay stretched along, each weary crew
 In a circle round its wondrous tent,
 Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich scent,
 And with light and perfume, music too :
 So the stars wheeled round, and the darkness past,
 And at morn we started beside the mast,
 And still each ship was sailing fast !

One morn, the land appeared !—a speck
 Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky—
 Avoid it, cried our pilot, check
 The shout, restrain the longing eye !

But the heaving sea was black behind
 For many a night and many a day,
 And land, though but a rock, drew nigh ;
 So we broke the cedar pales away,
 Let the purple awning flap in the wind,
 And a statue bright was on every deck !
 We shouted, every man of us,
 And steered right into the harbour thus,
 With pomp and pean glorious.

An hundred shapes of lucid stone !
 All day we built a shrine for each—
 A shrine of rock for every one—
 Nor paused we till in the westering sun
 We sate together on the beach
 To sing, because our task was done ;
 When lo ! what shouts and merry songs !
 What laughter all the distance stirs !
 What raft comes loaded with its throngs
 Of gentle islanders ?
 “The isles are just at hand,” they cried ;
 “Like cloudlets faint at even sleeping,
 “Our temple-gates are opened wide,
 “Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping
 “For the lucid shapes you bring”—they cried.
 Oh, then we awoke with sudden start
 From our deep dream ; we knew, too late,
 How bare the rock, how desolate,
 To which we had flung our precious freight :
 Yet we called out - “Depart !
 “Our gifts, once given, must here abide :
 “Our work is done ; we have no heart
 “To mar our work, though vain ”—we cried.

Fest. In truth ?

Par. Nay, wait : all this in tracings faint
 May still be read on that deserted rock,
 On rugged stones, strewn here and there, but piled
 In order once ; then follows—mark what follows—
 “The sad rhyme of the men who proudly clung
 “To their first fault, and withered in their pride !”

Fest. Come back, then, Aureole ; as you fear God, come !
 This is foul sin ; come back : renounce the past,
 Forswear the future ; look for joy no more,
 But wait death's summons amid holy sights,
 And trust me for the event—peace, if not joy !
 Return with me to Einsiedeln, dear Aureole.

Par. No way, no way : it would not turn to good.

A spotless child sleeps on the flowering moss—
 Tis well for him; but when a sinful man,
 Envyng such slumber, may desire to put
 His guilt away, shall he return at once
 To rest by lying there? Our sires knew well
 (Spite of the grave discoveries of their sons)
 The fitting course for such; dark cells, dim lamps,
 A stone floor one may writhe on like a worm;
 No mossy pillow, blue with violets!

Fest. I see no symptom of these absolute
 And tyrannous passions. You are calmer now.
 This verse-making can purge you well enough,
 Without the terrible penance you describe.
 You love me still: the lusts you fear will never
 Outrage your friend. To Einsiedeln, once more!
 Say but the word!

Par. No, no; those lusts forbid:
 They crouch, I know, cowering with half-shut eye
 Beside you; 'tis their nature. Thrust yourself
 Between them and their prey; let some fool style me
 Or king or quack, it matters not, and try
 Your wisdom then, at urging their retreat!
 No, no; learn better and look deeper, Festus!
 If you knew how a devil sneers within me
 While you are talking now of this, now that,
 As though we differed scarcely save in trifles!

Fest. Do we so differ? True, change must proceed,
 Whether for good or ill; keep from me, which!
 God made you and knows what you may become—
 Do not confide all secrets: I was born
 To hope, and you . . .

Par. To trust: you know the fruits!
Fest. Listen: I do believe, what you call trust
 Was self-reliance at the best: for, see!
 So long as God would kindly pioneer
 A path for you, and screen you from the world,
 Procure you full exemption from man's law,
 Man's common hopes and fears, on the mere pretext
 Of your engagement in his service—yield you
 A limitless license, make you God, in fact
 And turn your slave—you were content to say
 Most courtly praises! What is it, at last,
 But selfishness without example? None
 Could trace God's will so plain as you, while yours
 Remained implied in it; but now you fail,
 And we, who prate about that will, are fools!
 In short, God's service is established here
 As He determines fit, and not your way,

And this you cannot brook ! Such discontent
 Is weak. Renounce all creatureship at once !
 Affirm an absolute right to have and use
 Your energies ; as though the rivers should say—
 “ We rush to the ocean ; what have we to do
 “ With feeding streamlets, lingering in the marshes,
 “ Sleeping in lazy pools ? ” Set up that plea,
 That will be bold at least !

Par. Perhaps, perhaps !
 Your only serviceable spirits are those
 The East produces :—lo, the master nods,
 And they raise terraces, spread garden-grounds
 In one night’s space ; and, this done, straight begin
 Another century’s sleep, to the great praise
 Of him that framed them wise and beautiful,
 Till a lamp’s rubbing, or some chance akin,
 Wake them again. I am of different mould.
 I would have soothed my lord, and slaved for him,
 And done him service past my narrow bond,
 And thus I get rewarded for my pains !
 Beside, ’tis vain to talk of forwarding
 God’s glory otherwise ; this is alone
 The sphere of its increase, as far as men
 Increase it ; why, then, look beyond this sphere ?
 We are His glory ; and if we be glorious,
 Is not the thing achieved ?

Fest. Shall one like me
 Judge hearts like yours ? Though years have changed you
 much,
 And you have left your first love, and retain
 Its empty shade to veil your crooked ways,
 Yet I still hold that you have honoured God ;
 And who shall call your course without reward ?
 For, wherefore this repining at defeat,
 Had triumph ne’er inured you to high hopes ?
 I urge you to forsake the life you curse,
 And what success attends me ?—simply talk
 Of passion, weakness, and remorse ; in short,
 Anything but the naked truth : you choose
 This so-despised career, and rather praise
 Than take my happiness, or other men’s.
 Once more, return !

Par. And soon. Oporinus
 Has pilfered half my secrets by this time :
 And we depart by daybreak. I am weary,
 I know not how ; not even the wine-cup soothes
 My brain to-night . . .
 Do you not thoroughly despise me, Festus ?

No flattery ! One like you needs not be told
 We live and breathe deceiving and deceived.
 Do you not scorn me from your heart of hearts ?
 Me and my cant—my petty subterfuges—
 My rhymes, and all this frothy shower of words—
 My glozing self-deceit—my outward crust
 Of lies, which wrap, as tetter, morphew, furfair
 Wrap the sound flesh ?—so, see you flatter not !
 Why, even God flatters ! but my friend, at least,
 Is true. I would depart, secure henceforth
 Against all further insult, hate, and wrong
 From puny foes : my one friend's scorn shall brand me—
 No fear of sinking deeper !

Fest.

No, dear Aureole !

No, no ; I came to counsel faithfully :
 There are old rules, made long ere we were born,
 By which I judge you. I, so fallible,
 So infinitely low beside your spirit
 Mighty, majestic !—even I can see
 You own some higher law than ours which call
 Sin, what is no sin—weakness, what is strength ;
 But I have only these, such as they are,
 To guide me ; and I blame you where they blame,
 Only so long as blaming promises
 To win peace for your soul ; the more, that sorrow
 Has fallen on me of late, and they have helped me
 So that I faint not under my distress.
 But wherefore should I scruple to avow
 In spite of all, as brother judging brother,
 Your fate to me is most inexplicable :
 And should you perish without recompense
 And satisfaction yet—too hastily
 I have relied on love : you may have sinned,
 But you have loved. As a mere human matter—
 As I would have God deal with fragile men
 In the end—I say that you will triumph yet !

Par. Have you felt sorrow, Festus ?—tis because
 You love me. Sorrow, and sweet Michal yours !
 Well thought on ; never let her know this last
 Dull winding-up of all : these miscreants dared
 Insult me—me she loved ; so grieve her not.

Fest. Your ill success can little grieve her now.*Par.* Michal is dead ! pray Christ we do not craze !

Fest. Aureole, dear Aureole, look not on me thus !
 Fool, fool ! this is the heart grown sorrow-proof—
 I cannot bear those eyes.

Par. Nay, really dead ?*Fest.* 'Tis scarce a month . . .

Par. Stone dead!—then you have laid her
Among the flowers ere this. Now, do you know,
I can reveal a secret which shall comfort
Even you. I have no julep, as men think,
To cheat the grave; but a far better secret.
Know then, you did not ill to trust your love
To the cold earth: I have thought much of it:
For I believe we do not wholly die.

Fest. Aureole . . .

Par. Nay, do not laugh; there is a reason
For what I say: I think the soul can never
Taste death. I am, just now, as you may see,
Very unfit to put so strange a thought
In an intelligible dress of words;
But take it as my trust, she is not dead.

Fest. But not on this account alone? you surely,
—Aureole, you have believed this all along?

Par. And Michal sleeps among the roots and dews,
While I am moved at Basil, and full of schemes
For Nuremberg, and hoping and despairing,
As though it mattered how the farce plays out,
So it be quickly played. Away, away!
Have your will, rabble! while we fight the prize,
Troop you in safety to the snug back-seats,
And leave a clear arena for the brave
About to perish for your sport!—Behold!

V.—PARACELSIUS ATTAINS.

SCENE.—*A cell in the Hospital of St. Sebastian, at Salzburg.*
1541.

FESTUS, PARACELSIUS.

Fest. No change! The weary night is well nigh spent,
The lamp burns low, and through the casement-bars
Grey morning glimmers feebly—yet no change!
Another night, and still no sigh has stirred
That fallen discoloured mouth, no pang relit
Those fixed eyes, quenched by the decaying body,
Like torch-flame choked in dust: while all beside
Was breaking, to the last they held out bright,
As a stronghold where life intrenched itself;
But they are dead now—very blind and dead.
He will drowse into death without a groan!

My Aureole—my forgotten, ruined Aureole !
 The days are gone, are gone ! How grand thou wert :
 And now not one of those who struck thee down—
 Poor, glorious spirit—concerns him even to stay
 And satisfy himself his little hand
 Could turn God's image to a livid thing.
 Another night, and yet no change ! 'Tis much
 That I should sit by him, and bathe his brow,
 And chafe his hands — 'tis much ; but he will sue
 Know me, and look on me, and speak to me
 Once more—but only once ! His hollow check
 Looked all night long as though a creeping laugh
 At his own state were just about to break
 From the dying man : my brain swam, my throat swelled,
 And yet I could not turn away. In truth,
 They told me how, when first brought here, he seemed
 Resolved to live—to lose no faculty ;
 Thus striving to keep up his shattered strength,
 Until they bore him to this stifling cell :
 When straight his features fell—an hour made white
 The flushed face and relaxed the quivering limb ;
 Only the eye remained intense awhile,
 As though it recognised the tomb-like place ;
 And then he lay as here he lies.

Ay, here !

Here is earth's noblest, nobly garlanded—
 Her bravest champion, with his well-won meed—
 Her best achievement, her sublime amends
 For countless generations, fleeting fast
 And followed by no trace ;—the creature-god
 She instances when angels would dispute
 The title of her brood to rank with them—
 Angels, this is our angel !—those bright forms
 We clothe with purple, crown and call to thrones'
 Are human, but not his : those are but men
 Whom other men press round and kneel before—
 Those palaces are dwelt in by mankind ;
 Higher provision is for him you seek
 Amid our pomps and glories : see it here !
 Behold earth's paragon ! Now, raise thee, clay !

God ! Thou art Love ! I build my faith on that !
 Even as I watch beside thy tortured child,
 Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast by him,
 So doth thy right hand guide us through the world
 Wherein we stumble. God ! what shall we say ?
 How has he sinned ? How else should he have done ?
 Surely he sought thy praise—thy praise, for all

He might be busied by the task so much
 As to forget awhile its proper end.
 Dost thou well, Lord ? Thou canst not but prefer
 That I should range myself upon his side—
 How could he stop at every step to set
 Thy glory forth ? Hadst Thou but granted him
 Success, thy honour would have crowned success,
 A halo round a star. Or, say he erred,—
 Save him, dear God ; it will be like thee : bathe him
 In light and life ! Thou art not made like us ;
 We should be wroth in such a case ; but Thou
 Forgivest—so, forgive these passionate thoughts,
 Which come unsought, and will not pass away !
 I know thee, who hast kept my path, and made
 Light for me in the darkness—tempering sorrow,
 So that it reached me like a solemn joy ;
 It were too strange that I should doubt thy love :
 But what am I ? Thou madest him, and knowest
 How he was fashioned. I could never err
 That way : the quiet place beside thy feet,
 Reserved for me, was ever in my thoughts ;
 But he—Thou shouldst have favoured him as well !

Ah ! he wakes ! Aureole, I am here--'tis Festus !
 I cast away all wishes save one wish—
 Let him but know me—only speak to me !
 He mutters—louder and louder ; any other
 Than I, with brain less laden, could collect
 What he pours forth. Dear Aureole, do but look !
 Is it talking or singing this he utters fast ?
 Misery, that he should fix me with his eye—
 Quick talking to some other all the while !
 If he would husband this wild vehemence,
 Which frustrates its intent !—I heard, I know
 I heard my name amid those rapid words
 O he will know me yet ! Could I divert
 This current—lead it somehow gently back
 Into the channels of the past !—His eye,
 Brighter than ever ! It must recognise !

Let me speak to him in another's name.
 I am Erasmus : I am here to pray
 That Paracelsus use his skill for me.
 The schools of Paris and of Padua send
 These questions for your learning to resolve.
 We are your students, noble master : leave
 This wretched cell ; what business have you here ?
 Our class awaits you ; come to us once more.

(O agony ! the utmost I can do
 Touches him not ; how else arrest his ear ?)
 I am commissioned . . . I shall craze like him—
 Better be mute, and see what God shall send.

Par. Stay, stay with me !

Fest. I will ; I am come here
 To stay with you—Festus, you loved of old ;
 Festus, you know, you must know !

Par. Festus ! Where's
 Aprile, then ? Has he not chaunted softly
 The melodies I heard all night ? I could not
 Get to him for a cold hand on my breast,
 But I made out his music well enough,
 O, well enough ! If they have filled him full
 With magical music, as they freight a star
 With light, and have remitted all his sin,
 They will forgive me too, I too shall know !

Fest. Festus, your Festus !

Par. Ask him if Aprile
 Knows as he Loves—if I shall Love and Know ?
 I try ; but that cold hand, like lead—so cold !

Fest. My hand, see !

Par. Ah, the curse, Aprile, Aprile !
 We get so near—so very, very near !
 'Tis an old tale : Jove strikes the Titans down
 Not when they set about their mountain-piling,
 But when another rock would crown their work
 And Phaeton—doubtless his first radiant plunge
 Astonished mortals ; though the gods were calm,
 And Jove prepared his thunder : all old tales !

Fest. And what are these to you ?

Par. Ay, fiends must laugh
 So cruelly, so well ; most like I never
 Could tread a single pleasure under foot,
 But they were grinning by my side, were chuckling
 To see me toil, and drop away by flakes
 Hell-spawn ! I am glad, most glad, that thus I fail !
 You that hate men and all who wish their good—
 Your cunning has o'ershot its aim. One year,
 One month, perhaps, and I had served your turn !
 You should have curbed your spite awhile. But now,
 Who will believe 'twas you that held me back ?
 Listen : there's shame, and hissing, and contempt,
 And none but laughs who names me—none but spits
 Measureless scorn upon me—me alone,
 The quack, the cheat, the liar,—all on me !
 And thus your famous plan to sink mankind
 In silence and despair, by teaching them

One of their race had probed the inmost truth,
 Had done all man could do, yet failed no less—
 Your wise plan proves abortive. Men despair?
 Ha, ha! why they are hooting the empiric,
 The ignorant and incapable fool who rushed
 Madly upon a work beyond his wits;
 Nor doubt they but the simplest of themselves
 Could bring the matter to triumphant issue!
 So pick and choose among them all, Accursed!
 Try now, persuade some other to slave for you,
 To ruin body and soul to work your ends:
 No, no; I am the first and last, I think!

Fest. Dear friend, who are accursed? who has done . . .

Par. What have I done? Fiends dare ask that? or you,
 Brave men? Oh, you can chime in boldly, backed
 By the others! What had you to do, sage peers?
 Here stand my rivals, truly—Arab, Jew,
 Greek, join dead hands against me: all I ask
 Is, that the world enrol my name with theirs,
 And even this poor privilege, it seems,
 They range themselves, prepared to disallow!
 Only observe: why fiends may learn from them!
 How they talk calmly of my throes—my fierce
 Aspirings, terrible watchings—each one claiming
 Its price of blood and brain; how they dissect
 And sneeringly disparage the few truths
 Got at a life's cost; they too hanging the while
 About my neck, their lies misleading me,
 And their dead names brow-beating me! Grey crew
 Yet steeped in fresh malevolence from hell,
 Is there a reason for your hate? My truths
 Have shaken a little the palm about each head?
 Just think, Aprile, all these leering dotards
 Were bent on nothing less than being crowned
 As we! That yellow blear-eyed wretch in chief,
 To whom the rest cringe low with feigned respect—
 Galen, of Pergamos and hell; nay, speak
 The tale, old man! We met there face to face:
 I said the crown should fall from thee: once more
 We meet as in that ghastly vestibule:
 Look to my brow! Have I redeemed my pledge?

Fest. Peace, peace; ah, see!

Par. Oh, emptiness of fame!
 Oh, Persic Zoroaster, lord of stars!
 —Who said these old renowns, dead long ago,
 Could make me overlook the living world
 To gaze through gloom at where they stood, indeed,
 But stand no longer? What a warm light life

After the shade ! In truth, my delicate witch,
 My serpent-queen, you did but well to hide
 The juggles I had else detected. Fire
 May well run harmless o'er a breast like yours !
 The cave was not so darkened by the smoke
 But that your white limbs dazzled me : Oh, white,
 And panting as they twinkled, wildly dancing !
 I cared not for your passionate gestures then,
 But now I have forgotten the charm of charms,
 The foolish knowledge which I came to seek,
 While I remember that quaint dance ; and thus
 I am come back, not for those mummuries,
 But to love you, and to kiss your little feet,
 Soft as an ernine's winter coat !

Fest.

A sense

Will struggle through these thronging words at last,
 As in the angry and tumultuous west
 A soft star trembles through the drifting clouds.
 These are the strivings of a spirit which hates
 So sad a vault should coop it, and calls up
 The past to stand between it and its fate :
 Were he at Einsiedeln—or Michal here !

Par. Cruel ! I seek her now—I kneel—I shriek—
 I clasp her vesture—but she fades, still fades ;
 And she is gone ; sweet human love is gone !
 'Tis only when they spring to heaven that angels
 Reveal themselves to you ; they sit all day
 Beside you, and lie down at night by you,
 Who care not for their presence—muse or sleep—
 And all at once they leave you and you know them !
 We are so fooled, so cheated ! Why, even now
 I am not too secure against foul play :
 The shadows deepen, and the walls contract —
 No doubt some treachery is going on !
 'Tis very dusk. Where are we put, Aprile ?
 Have they left us in the lurch ? This murky, loathsome
 Death-trap—this slaughter-house—is not the hall
 In the golden city ! Keep by me, Aprile !
 There is a hand groping amid the blackness
 To catch us. Have the spider-fingers got you,
 Poet ? Hold on me for your life ; if once
 They pull you !—Hold !

'Tis but a dream—no more.

I have you still—the sun comes out again ;
 Let us be happy—all will yet go well !
 Let us confer : is it not like, Aprile,
 That spite of trouble, this ordeal passed,
 The value of my labours ascertained,

PARACELSIUS.

Just as some stream foams long among the rocks
But after glideth glassy to the sea,
So, full content shall henceforth be my lot ?
What think you, poet ? Louder ! Your clear voice
Vibrates too like a harp-string. Do you ask
How could I still remain on earth, should God
Grant me the great approval which I seek ?
I, you, and God can comprehend each other,
But men would murmur, and with cause enough ;
For when they saw me, stainless of all sin,
Preserved and sanctified by inward light,
They would complain that comfort, shut from them,
I drank thus unespied ; that they live on,
Nor taste the quiet of a constant joy,
For ache, and care, and doubt, and weariness,
While I am calm ; help being vouchsafed to me,
And hid from them ! -- "Twere best consider that !
You reason well, Aprile ; but at least
Let me know this, and die ! Is this too much ?
I will learn this, if God so please, and die !

If thou shalt please, dear God, if thou shalt please !
We are so weak, we know our motives least
In their confused beginning : if at first
I sought . . . But wherefore bare my heart to thee ?
I know thy mercy ; and already thoughts
Flock fast about my soul to comfort it,
And intimate I cannot wholly fail,
For love and praise would clasp me willingly
Could I resolve to seek them : Thou art good,
And I should be content ; yet— yet first show
I have done wrong in daring ! Rather give
The supernatural consciousness of strength
That fed my youth—one only hour of that
With thee to help—O what should bar me then !

Lost, lost ! Thus things are ordered here ! God's creatures.
And yet he takes no pride in us !—none, none !
Truly there needs another life to come !
If this be all—(I must tell Festus that)
And other life await us not—for one,
I say 'tis a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,
A wretched failure. I, for one, protest
Against it—and I hurl it back with scorn !

Well, onward though alone : small time remains,
And much to do : I must have fruit, must reap
Some profit from my toils. I doubt my body

Will hardly serve me through : while I have laboured
 It has decayed ; and now that I demand
 Its best assistance, it will crumble fast :
 A sad thought—a sad fate ! How very full
 Of wormwood 'tis, that just at altar-service,
 The rapt hymn rising with the rolling smoke
 When glory dawns, and all is at the best—
 The sacred fire may flicker, and grow faint,
 And die, for want of a wood-piler's help !
 Thus fades the flagging body, and the soul
 Is pulled down in the overthrow : well, well—
 Let men catch every word—let them lose nought
 Of what I say ; something may yet be done.

They are ruins ! Trust me who am one of you !
 All ruins—glorious once, but lonely now.
 It makes my heart sick to behold you crouch
 Beside your desolate fane ; the arches dim,
 The crumbling columns grand against the moon
 Could I but rear them up once more—but that
 May never be, so leave them ! Trust me, friends,
 Why should you linger here when I have built
 A far resplendent temple, all your own ?
 Trust me, they are but ruins ! See, Aprile,
 Men will not heed ! Yet were I not prepared
 With better refuge for them, tongue of mine
 Should ne'er reveal how blank their dwelling is ;
 I would sit down in silence with the rest.

Ha, what ? you spit at me, you grin and shriek
 Contempt into my ear—my ear which drank
 God's accents once ? you curse me ? Why men, men,
 I am not formed for it ! Those hideous eyes
 Follow me sleeping, waking, praying God,
 And will not let me even die : spare, spare me.
 Sinning or no, forget that, only spare me
 That horrible scorn ; you thought I could support it,
 But now you see what silly fragile creature
 Cowers thus. I am not good nor bad enough,
 Not Christ, nor Cain, yet even Cain was saved
 From hate like this : let me but totter back,
 Perhaps I shall elude those jeers which creep
 Into my very brain, and shut these scorched
 Eyelids, and keep those mocking faces out.

Listen, Aprile ! I am very calm :
 Be not deceived, there is no passion here,
 Where the blood leaps like an imprisoned thing,

I am calm : I will exterminate the race !
 Enough of that : 'tis said and it shall be.
 And now be merry—safe and sound am I,
 Who broke through their best ranks to get at you ;
 And such a havoc, such a rout, Aprile !

Fest. Have you no thought, no memory for me,
 Aureole ? I am so wretched—my pure Michal
 Is gone, and you alone are left to me,
 And even you forget me : take my hand—
 Lean on me, thus. Do you not know me, Aureole ?

Par. Festus, my own friend, you are come at last ?
 As you say, 'tis an awful enterprise—
 But you believe I shall go through with it :
 'Tis like you, and I thank you ; thank him for me,
 Dear Michal ! See how bright St. Saviour's spire
 Flames in the sunset ; all its figures quaint
 Gay in the glancing light : you might conceive them
 A troop of yellow-vested, white-haired Jews,
 Bound for their own land where redemption dawns !

Fest. Not that blest time—not our youth's time, dear God !

Par. Ha—stay ! true, I forget—all is done since !
 And he is come to judge me : how he speaks,
 How calm, how well ! yes, it is true, all true ;
 All quackery ; all deceit ! myself can laugh
 The first at it, if you desire : but still
 You know the obstacles which taught me tricks
 So foreign to my nature—envy, and hate—
 Blind opposition—brutal prejudice—
 Bald ignorance—what wonder if I sunk
 To humour men the way they most approved ?
 My cheats were never palmed on such as you,
 Dear Festus ! I will kneel if you require me,
 Impart the mangro knowledge I possess,
 Explain its bounded nature, and avow
 My insufficiency—whate'er you will :
 I give the fight up ! let there be an end,
 A privaey, an obscure nook for me.
 I want to be forgotten even by God !
 But if that cannot be, dear Festus, lay me,
 When I shall die, within some narrow grave,
 Not by itself—for that would be too proud—
 But where such graves are thickest ; let it look
 Nowise distinguished from the hillocks round,
 So that the peasant at his brother's bed
 May tread upon my own and know it not ;
 And we shall all be equal at the last,
 Or classed according to life's natural ranks,
 Fathers, sons, brothers, friends—not rich, nor wise.

Nor gifted : lay me thus, then say " He lived
 " Too much advanced before his brother men :
 " They kept him still in front ; 'twas for their good,
 " But yet a dangerous station. It were strange
 " That he should tell God he had never ranked
 " With men : so, here at least he is a man ! "

Fest. That God shall take thee to his breast, dear Spirit,
 Unto his breast, be sure ! and here on earth
 Shall splendour sit upon thy name for ever !
 Sun ! all the heaven is glad for thee : what care
 If lower mountains light their snowy phares
 At thine effulgence, yet acknowledge not
 The source of day ? Men look up to the sun
 For after-ages shall retrack thy beams,
 And put aside the crowd of busy ones,
 And worship thee alone—the master-mind,
 The thinker, the explorer, the creator !
 Then, who should sneer at the convulsive throes
 With which thy deeds were born, would scorn as well
 The winding-sheet of subterraneous fire
 Which, pent and writhing, sends no less at last
 Huge islands up amid the simmering sea !
 Behold thy might in me ! thou hast infused
 Thy soul in mine ; and I am grand as thou.
 Seeing I comprehend thee—I so simple,
 Thou so august ! I recognised thee first ;
 I saw thee rise, I watched thee early and late,
 And though no glance reveal thou dost accept
 My homage—thus no less I profer it,
 And bid thee enter gloriously thy rest !

Par. Festus !

Fest. I am for noble Aureole, God !
 I am upon his side, come weal or woe !
 His portion shall be mine ! He has done well !
 I would have sinned, had I been strong enough,
 As he has sinned ! Reward him or I waive
 Reward ! If thou canst find no place for him
 He shall be king elsewhere, and I will be
 His slave for ever ! There are two of us !

Par. Dear Festus !

Fest. Here, dear Aureole ! ever by you i

Par. Nay, speak on, or I dream again. Speak on !

Some story, anything—only your voice.

I shall dream else. Speak on ! ay, leaning so !

Fest. Softly the Mayne river glideth

Close by where my love abideth ;

Sleep's no softer : it proceeds

On through lawns, on through meads,

On and on, whate'er befall,
 Meandering and musical,
 Though the niggard pasture's edge
 Bears not on its shaven ledge
 Aught but weeds and waving grasses
 To view the river as it passes,
 Save here and there a scanty patch
 Of primroses, too faint to catch
 A weary bee . . .

Par. More, more ; say on !

Fest. The river pushes
 Its gentle way through strangling rushes,
 Where the glossy king-fisher
 Flutters when noon-heats are near,
 Glad the shelving banks to shun,
 Red and steaming in the sun,
 Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat
 Burrows, and the speckled stont,
 Where the quick sand-pipers flit
 In and out the marl and grit
 That seems to breed them, brown as they
 Nought disturbs the river's way,
 Save some lazy stork that springs,
 Trailing it with legs and wings,
 Whom the shy fox from the hill
 Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

Par. My heart ! they loose my heart, those simple words ;
 Its darkness passes, which nought else could touch ;
 Like some dark snake that force may not expel,
 Which glideth out to music sweet and low.
 What were you doing when your voice broke through
 A chaos of ugly images ? You, indeed !
 Are you alone here ?

Fest. All alone : you know me ?
 This cell ?

Par. An unexceptionable vault—
 Good brick and stone—the bats kept out, the rats
 Kept in—a snug nook : how should I mistake it ?

Fest. But wherefore am I here ?

Par. Ah ! well remembered :
 Why, for a purpose—for a purpose, Festus !
 'Tis like me : here I trifle while time fleets,
 And this occasion, lost, will ne'er return !
 You are here to be instructed. I will tell
 God's message ; but I have so much to say,
 I fear to leave half out : all is confused
 No doubt ; but doubtless you will learn in time.
 He would not else have brought you here : no doubt

I shall see clearer soon.

Fest.

Tell me but this—

You are not in despair?

Par.

I? and for what?

Fest. Alas, alas! he knows not, as I feared!

Par. What is it you would ask me with that earnest,
Dear, searching face?

Fest.

How feel you, Aureole?

Par.

Well!

Well: 'tis a strange thing. I am dying, Festus,
And now that fast the storm of life subsides,
I first perceive how great the whirl has been:
I was calm then, who am so dizzy now—
Calm in the thick of the tempest, but no less
A partner of its motion, and mixed up
With its career. The hurricane is spent,
And the good boat speeds through the brightening weather
But is it earth or sea that heaves below?
For the gulf rolls like a meadow, overstrewn
With ravaged boughs and remnants of the shore;
And now some islet, loosened from the land,
Swims past with all its trees, sailing to ocean;
And now the air is full of up-torn canes,
Light stripplings from the fan-trees, tamarisks
Unrooted, with their birds still clinging to them,
All high in the wind. Even so my varied life
Drifts by me. I am young, old, happy, sad,
Hoping, desponding, acting, taking rest,
And all at once: that is, those past conditions
Float back at once on me. If I select
Some special epoch from the crowd, 'tis but
To will, and straight the rest dissolve away,
And only that particular state is present,
With all its long-forgotten circumstance,
Distinct and vivid as at first—myself
A careless looker-on, and nothing more!
Indifferent and amused, but nothing more!
And this is death: I understand it all.
New being waits me; new perceptions must
Be born in me before I plunge therein;
Which last is Death's affair; and while I speak,
Minute by minute he is filling me
With power; and while my foot is on the threshold
Of boundless life—the doors unopened yet,
All preparations not complete within—
I turn new knowledge upon old events,
And the effect is . . . But I must not tell;
It is not lawful. Your own turn will come

One day. Wait, Festus ! You will die like me !

Fest. 'Tis of that past life that I burn to hear !

Par. You wonder it engages me just now ?

In truth, I wonder too. What's life to me ?

Where'er I look is fire, where'er I listen

Music, and where I tend bliss evermore.

Yet how can I refrain ? 'Tis a refined

Delight to view those chances,--one last view.

I am so near the perils I escape,

That I must play with them and turn them over,
To feel how fully they are past and gone.

Still it is like some further cause exists

For this peculiar mood—some hidden purpose ;

Did I not tell you something of it, Festus ?

I had it fast, but it has somehow slipt

Away from me ; it will return anon.

Fest. (Indeed his cheek seems young again, his voice

Complete with its old tones : that little laugh

Concluding every phrase, with up-turned eye,

As though one stooped above his head, to whom

He looked for confirmation and applause,--

Where was it gone so long, being kept so well ?

Then, the forefinger pointing as he speaks

Like one who traces in an open book

The matter he declares ; 'tis many a year

Since I remarked it last : and this in him,

But now a ghastly wreck !)

And can it be,

Dear Aureole, you have then found out at last

That worldly things are utter vanity ?

That man is made for weakness, and should wait

In patient ignorance till God appoint . . .

Par. Ha, the purpose : the true purpose ; that is it !

How could I fail to apprehend ? You here,

I thus ! But no more trifling ; I see all,

I know all : my last mission shall be done

If strength suffice. No trifling ! Stay ; this posture

Hardly befits one thus about to speak :

I will arise.

Fest. Nay, Aureole, are you wild ?

You cannot leave your couch.

Par. No help ; no help ;

Not even your hand. So ! there, I stand once more !

Speak from a couch ? I never lectured thus.

My gown—the scarlet, lined with fur ; now put

The chain about my neck ; my signet-ring

Is still upon my hand, I think—even so ;

Last, my good sword ; ha, trusty Azoth, leapest

Beneath thy master's grasp for the last time ?
 This couch shall be my throne : I bid these walls
 Be consecrate ; this wretched cell become
 A shrine ; for here God speaks to men through me !
 Now, Festus, I am ready to begin.

Fest. I am dumb with wonder.

Par. Listen, therefore, Festus !
 There will be time enough, but none to spare.
 I must content myself with telling only
 The most important points. You doubtless feel
 That I am happy, Festus ; very happy.

Fest. 'Tis no delusion which uplifts him thus !
 Then you are pardoned, Aureole, all your sin ?

Par. Ay, pardoned ! yet why pardoned ?

Fest. 'Tis God's praise
 That man is bound to seek, and you . . .

Par. Have lived !
 We have to live alone to set forth well
 God's praise. 'Tis true, I sinned much, as I thought,
 And in effect need mercy, for I strove
 To do that very thing ; but, do your best
 Or worst, praise rises, and will rise for ever.
 Pardon from Him, because of praise denied—
 Who calls me to Himself to exalt Himself ?
 He might laugh as I laugh !

Fest. Then all comes
 To the same thing. 'Tis fruitless for mankind
 To fret themselves with what concerns them not ;
 They are no use that way : they should lie down
 Content as God has made them, nor go mad
 In thrivelless cares to better what is ill.

Par. No, no ; mistake me not ; let me not work
 More harm than I have done ! This is my case :
 If I go joyous back to God, yet bring
 No offering, if I render up my soul
 Without the fruits it was ordained to bear,
 If I appear the better to love God
 For sin, as one who has no claim on him,—
 Be not deceived : it may be surely thus
 With me, while higher prizes still await
 The mortal persevering to the end.
 For I too have been something, though too soon
 I left the instincts of that happy time !

Fest. What happy time ? For God's sake, for man's sake,
 What time was happy ? All I hope to know
 That answer will decide. What happy time ?

Par. When, but the time I vowed my help to man

Par. Great God, thy judgments are inscrutable !

Par. Yes, it was in me ; I was born for it—
 I, Paracelsus : it was mine by right.
 Doubtless a searching and impetuous soul
 Might learn from its own motions that some task
 Like this awaited it about the world ;
 Might seek somewhere in this blank life of ours
 For fit delights to stay its longings vast ;
 And, grappling Nature, so prevail on her
 To fill the creature full she dared to frame
 Hungry for joy ; and, bravely tyrannous,
 Grow in demand, still craving more and more,
 And make each joy conceded prove a pledge
 Of other joy to follow—bating nought
 Of its desires, still seizing fresh pretence
 To turn the knowledge and the rapture wrung
 As an extreme, last boon, from Destiny.
 Into occasion for new covetings,
 New strifes, new triumphs :—doubtless a strong soul
 Alone, unaided might attain to this,
 So glorious is our nature, so angst
 Man's inborn uninstructed impulses,
 His naked spirit so majestical !
 But this was born in me ; I was made so ;
 Thus much time saved : the feverish appetites,
 The tumult of unproved desire, the unaimed
 Uncertain yearnings, aspirations blind,
 Distrust, mistake, and all that ends in tears
 Were saved me ; thus I entered on my course !
 You may be sure I was not all exempt
 From human trouble ; just so much of doubt
 As bade me plant a surer foot upon
 The sun-road—kept my eye unruined mid
 The fierce and flashing splendour—set my heart
 Trembling so much as warned me I stood there
 On sufferance—not to idly gaze, but cast
 Light on a darkling race ; save for that doubt,
 I stood at first where all aspire at last
 To stand : the secret of the world was mine.
 I knew, I felt, (perception unexpressed,
 Uncomprehended by our narrow thought,
 But somehow felt and known in every shift
 And change in the spirit,—nay, in every pore
 Of the body, even,)—what God is, what we are,
 What life is—how God tastes an infinite joy
 In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss,
 From whom all being emanates, all power
 Proceeds ; in whom is life for evermore,
 Yet whom existence in its lowest form

Includes ; where dwells enjoyment there is He !
 With still a flying point of bliss remote,
 A happiness in store afar, a sphere
 Of distant glory in full view ; thus climbs
 Pleasure its heights for ever and for ever !
 The centre-fire heaves underneath the earth,
 And the earth changes like a human face ;
 The molten ore bursts up among the rocks,
 Winds into the stone's heart, outbranches bright
 In hidden mines, spots barren river-beds,
 Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams bask--
 God joys therein ! The wroth sea's waves are edged
 With foam, white as the bitten lip of Hate,
 When, in the solitary waste, strange groups
 Of young volcanoes come up, Cyclops-like,
 Staring together with their eyes on flame ;—
 God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth pride !
 Then all is still : earth is a wintry clod ;
 But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes
 Over its breast to waken it ; rare verdure
 Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between
 The withered tree-roots and the cracks of frost,
 Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face ;
 The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln with blooms,
 Like chrysalids impatient for the air ;
 The shining dohrs are busy ; beetles run
 Along the furrows, ants make their ado ;
 Above, birds fly in merry flocks—the lark
 Soars up and up, shivering for very joy ;
 Afar the ocean sleeps ; white fishing-gulls
 Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe
 Of nested limpets ; savage creatures seek
 Their loves in wood and plain ; and God renews
 His ancient rapture ! Thus He dwells in all,
 From life's minute beginnings, up at last
 To man—the consummation of this scheme
 Of being, the completion of this sphere
 Of life : whose attributes have here and there
 Been scattered o'er the visible world before,
 Asking to be combined—dim fragments meant
 To be united in some wondrous whole—
 Imperfect qualities throughout creation,
 Suggesting some one creature yet to make—
 Some point where all those scattered rays should meet
 Convergent in the faculties of man.
 Power ; neither put forth blindly, nor controlled
 Calmly by perfect knowledge ; to be used
 At risk, inspired or checked by hope and fear :

Knowledge ; not intuition, but the slow
 Uncertain fruit of an enhancing toil,
 Strengthened by love : love ; not serenely pure,
 But strong from weakness, like a chance-sown plant
 Which, cast on stubborn soil, puts forth changed buds,
 And softer stains, unknown in happier climes ;
 Love which endures, and doubts, and is oppressed,
 And cherished, suffering much, and much sustained,
 A blind, oft-failing, yet believing love,
 A half-enlightened, often-conquered trust :—
 Hints and previsions of which faculties
 Are strewn confusedly everywhere about
 The inferior natures ; and all lead up higher,
 All shape out dimly the superior race,
 The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false,
 And Man appears at last : so far the seal
 Is put on life ; one stage of being complete,
 One scheme wound up ; and from the grand result
 A supplementary reflux of light,
 Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains
 Each back step in the circle. Not alone
 For their possessor dawn those quainties,
 But the new glory mixes with the heaven
 And earth : Man, once descried, imprints for ever
 His presence on all lifeless things ; the winds
 Are henceforth voices, in a wail or shout,
 A querulous mutter, or a quick gay laugh—
 Never a senseless gust now man is born !
 The herded pines commune, and have deep thoughts,
 A secret they assemble to discuss,
 When the sun drops behind their trunks which glare
 Like grates of hell : the peerless cup afloat
 Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph
 Swims bearing high above her head : no bird
 Whistles unseen, but through the gaps above
 That let light in upon the gloomy woods,
 A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,
 Arch with small puckered mouth and mocking eye :
 The morn has enterprise,—deep quiet droops
 With evening ; triumph takes the sun-set hour,
 Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn
 Beneath a warm moon like a happy face :
 —And this to fill us with regard for man,
 With apprehension of his passing worth,
 Desire to work his proper nature out,
 And ascertain his rank and final place ;
 For these things tend still upward—progress is
 The law of life—man's self is not yet Man !

Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,
While only here and there a star dispels
The darkness, here and there a towering mind
O'erlooks its prostrate fellows: when the host
Is out at once to the despair of night,
When all mankind alike is perfected,
Equal in full-blown powers—then, not till then,
I say, begins man's general infancy !
For wherefore make account of feverish starts
Of restless members of a dormant whole—
Impatient nerves which quiver while the body
Slumbers as in a grave ? O, long ago
The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids astir,
The peaceful mouth disturbed ; half-uttered speech
Ruffled the lip, and then the teeth were set,
The breath drawn sharp, the strong right-hand clenched
stronger,
As it would pluck a lion by the jaw ;
The glorious creature laughed out even in sleep :
But when full roused, each giant-limb awake,
Each sinew strung, the great heart pulsing fast,
He shall start up, and stand on his own earth,
And so begin his long triumphant march,
And date his being thence,—thus wholly roused,
What he achieves shall be set down to him !
When all the race is perfected alike
As Man, that is : ill tended to mankind,
And, man produced, all has its end thus far ;
But in completed man begins anew
A tendency to God. Prognostics told
Man's near approach ; so in man's self arise
August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendour ever on before,
In that eternal circle run by life :
For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant
Their proper joys and griefs ; and outgrow all
The narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
Before the unmeasured thirst for good ; while peace
Rises within them ever more and more.
Such men are even now upon the earth,
Serene amid the half-formed creatures round,
Who should be saved by them and joined with them.
Such was my task, and I was born to it—
Free, as I said but now, for much that chains
Spirits, high-dowered, but limited and vexed
By a divided and delusive aim,

A shadow mocking a reality
Whose truth avails not wholly to disperse
The flitting mimic called up by itself,
And so remains perplexed and nigh put out
By its fantastic fellow's wavering gleam.
I, from the first, was never cheated so ;
I never fashioned out a fancied good
Distinct from man's ; a service to be done
A glory to be ministered unto,
With powers put forth at man's expense, withdrawn
From labouring in his behalf ; a strength
Denied that might avail him ! I cared not
Lest his success ran counter to success
Elsewhere : for God is glorified in man,
And to man's glory, vowed I soul and limb.
Yet, constituted thus, and thus endowed,
I failed : I gazed on power till I grew blind—
On power ; I could not take my eyes from that—
That only, I thought, should be preserved, increased
At any risk, displayed, struck out at once—
The sign, and note, and character of man.
I saw no use in the past : only a scene
Of degradation, imbecility—
The record of disgraces best forgotten,
A sullen page in human chronicles
Fit to erase : I saw no cause why man
Should not be all-sufficient even now ;
Or why his annals should be forced to tell
That once the tide of light, about to break
Upon the world, was sealed within its spring ;
I would have had one day, one moment's space,
Change man's condition, push each slumbering claim
To mastery o'er the elemental world
At once to full maturity, then roll
Oblivion o'er the tools, and hide from man
What night had ushered morn. Not so, dear child
Of after-days, wilt thou reject the Past,
Big with deep warnings of the proper tenure
By which thou hast the earth : the Present for thee
Shall have distinct and trembling beauty, seen
Beside that Past's own shade, whence, in relief,
Its brightness shall stand out : nor on thee yet
Shall burst the Future, as successive zones
Of several wonder open on some spirit
Flying secure and glad from heaven to heaven ;
But thou shalt painfully attain to joy,
While hope, and fear, and love, shall keep thee man !
All this was hid from me : as one by one

My dreamis grew dim, my wide aimis circumscribed,
 As actual good within my reach decreased,
 While obstacles sprung up this way and that,
 To keep me from effecting half the sum,
 Small as it proved ; as objects, mean within
 The primal aggregate, seemed, even the least,
 Itself a match for my concentrated strength—
 What wonder if I saw no way to shun
 Despair ? The power I sought for man, seemed God's !
 In this conjuncture, as I prayed to die,
 A strange adventure made me know, One Sin
 Had spotted my career from its uprise ;
 I saw Aprile—my Aprile there !
 And as the poor melodious wretch disburthened
 His heart, and moaned his weakness in my ear,
 I learned my own deep error ; love's undoing
 Taught me the worth of love in man's estate,
 And what proportion love should hold with power
 In his right constitution ; love preceding
 Power, and with much power, always much more love ;
 Love still too straitened in its present means,
 And earnest for new power to set it free.
 I learned this, and supposed the whole was learned :
 And thus, when men received with stupid wonder
 My first revealings, would have worshipped me,
 And I despised and loathed their proffered praise—
 When, with awakened eyes, they took revenge
 For past credulity in casting shame
 On my real knowledge, and I hated them—
 It was not strange I saw no good in man,
 To overbalance all the wear and waste
 Of faculties, displayed in vain, but born
 To prosper in some better sphere : and why ?
 In my own heart love had not been made wise
 To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,
 To know even hate is but a mask of love's,
 To see a good in evil, and a hope
 In ill-success ; to sympathize, be proud
 Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim
 Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
 Their prejudice, and fears, and cares, and doubts
 Which all touch upon nobleness, despite
 Their error, all tend upwardly though weak,
 Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,
 But dream of him, and guess where he may be
 And do their best to climb and get to him.
 All this I knew not, and I failed. Let men
 Regard me, and the poet dead long ago

Who once loved rashly ; and shape forth a third,
And better tempered spirit, warned by both :
As from the over-radiant star too mad
To drink the light-springs, beamless thence itself—
And the dark orb which borders the abyss,
Ingulfed in icy night,—might have its course
A temperate and equidistant world.
Meanwhile, I have done well, though not all well.
As yet men cannot do without contempt—
'Tis for their good, and therefore fit awhile
That they reject the weak, and scorn the false,
Rather than praise the strong and true, in me.
But after, they will know me ! If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud
It is but for a time ; I press God's lamp
Close to my breast—its splendour, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom : I shall emerge one day !
You understand me ? I have said enough !

Fest. Now die, dear Aureole!

Fest. And this was Paracelsus!

NOTE.

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THE liberties I have taken with my subject are very trifling: and the reader may slip the foregoing scenes between the leaves of any memoir of Paracelsus he pleases, by way of commentary. To prove this, I subjoin a popular account, translated from the "*Biographie Universelle, Paris, 1822,*" which I select, not as the best, certainly, but as being at hand, and sufficiently concise for my purpose. I also append a few notes, in order to correct those parts which do not bear out my own view of the character of Paracelsus; and have incorporated with them a notice or two, illustrative of the poem itself.

"*PARACELSIUS (Philippus Aurcolus Theophrastus Bombastus ab Hohenheim)* was born in 1493 at Einsiedeln,⁽¹⁾ a little town in the canton of Schwitz, some leagues distant from Zurich. His father, who exercised the profession of medicine at Villach, in Carinthia, was nearly related to George Bombast de Hohenheim, who became afterward Grand Prior of the Order of Malta; consequently Paracelsus could not spring from the dregs of the people, as Thomas Erastus, his sworn enemy, pretends.* It appears that his elementary education was much neglected, and that he spent part of his youth in pursuing the life common to the travelling *literati* of the age; that is to say, in wandering from country to country, predicting the future by astrology and cheiromancy, evoking apparitions, and practising the different operations of magic and alchemy, in which he had been initiated whether by his father or by various ecclesiastics, among the number of whom he particularizes the Abbot Tritheim,⁽²⁾ and many German bishops.

"As Paracelsus displays everywhere an ignorance of the rudiments of the most ordinary knowledge, it is not probable that he ever studied seriously in the schools: he contented himself with visiting the Universities of Germany, France, and Italy; and in spite of his boasting himself to have been the ornament of those

* I shall disguise M. Renaudin's next sentence a little. "Hic (Erastus sc.) Paracelsum trimum à milite quodam, ali à suo exectum ferunt: constat imberhem illum fuisse." A standing High-Dutch joke in those days at the expense of a number of learned men, as may be seen by referring to such rubbish as Melander's *Jocoseria*, &c., &c. In the prints from his portrait by Tintoretto, painted a year before his death, Paracelsus is *barbutatus*, at all events. But Erastus was never without a good reason for his faith—e.g. "Helvetium fuisse (Paracelsum) vix credo, vix enim ea regio tale monstrum ediderit."—*de Med. Novis*

institutions, there is no proof of his having legally acquired the title of Doctor, which he assumes. It is only known that he applied himself long, under the direction of the wealthy Sigismund Fugger, of Schwatz, to the discovery of the *Magnum Opus*.

"Paracelsus travelled among the mountains of Bohemia, in the East, and in Sweden, in order to inspect the labours of the miners, to be initiated in the mysteries of the oriental adepts, and to observe the secrets of nature and the famous mountains of load-stone.⁽³⁾ He professes also to have visited Spain, Portugal, Prussia, Poland, and Transylvania; everywhere communicating freely, not merely with the physicians, but the old women, charlatans, and conjurers, of these several lands. It is even believed that he extended his journeys as far as Egypt and Tartary, and that he accompanied the son of the Khan of the Tartars to Constantinople, for the purpose of obtaining the secret of the tincture of Tri-negistus, from a Greek who inhabited that capital.

"The period of his return to Germany is unknown: it is only certain that, at about the age of thirty-three, many astonishing cures which he wrought on eminent personages procured him such celebrity, that he was called in 1526, on the recommendation of Ecolampadius,⁽⁴⁾ to fill a chair of physic and surgery at the University of Basil. There Paracelsus began by burning publicly in the amphitheatre the works of Avicenna and Galen, assuring his auditors that the latches of his shoes were more instructed than those two physicians; that all Universities, all writers put together, were less gifted than the hairs of his beard and of the crown of his head; and that, in a word, he was to be regarded as the legitimate monarch of medicine. 'You shall follow me,' cried he, 'you, Avicenna, Galen, Rhasis, Montagnana, Mesues, you, Gentlemen of Paris, Montpellier, Germany, Cologne, Vienna,* and whomever the Rhine and the Danube nourish; you who inhabit the isles of the sea: you, likewise, Dalmatians, Athenians; thou, Arab; thou, Greek; thou, Jew; all shall follow me, and the monarchy shall be mine.'[†]

"But at Basil it was speedily perceived that the new Professor was no better than an egregious quack. Scarcely a year elapsed before his lectures had fairly driven away an audience incapable of comprehending their emphatic jargon. That which above all contributed to sully his reputation was the debauched life he led. According to the testimony of Oporinus, who lived two years in his intimacy, Paracelsus scarcely ever ascended the lecture-desk

* Erasmus, who relates this, here oddly remarks, "mirum quod non et Garamontos, Indos et Anglos adjunxit." Not so wonderful neither, if we believe what another adversary "had heard somewhere,"—that all Paracelsus' system came of his pillaging "Angulum quandam, Rogerium Baechonem."

† See his works *passim*. I must give one specimen:—Somebody had been styling him "Luther alter;" "and why not?" (he asks, as he well might) "Luther is abundantly learned, therefore you hate him and me; but we are at least a match for you.—Nam et contra vos et vestros universos principes Avicennam, Galenum, Aristotelem, &c. me satis superque munitum esse novi. Et vertex iste meus calvus ac depilis multo plurim et sublimiora novit quam vester vel Avicenna vel universe academie. Prodite, et signum date, qui viri sitis, quid roboris habetis? quid autem sitis? Doctores et magistri, podiculos peccantes et fricantes podicem."—*Frag. Med.*

unless half-drunk, and only dictated to his secretaries when in a state of intoxication: if summoned to attend the sick, he rarely proceeded thither without previously drenching himself with wine. He was accustomed to retire to bed without changing his clothes; sometimes he spent the night in pot-houses with the peasants, and in the morning knew no longer what he was about; and, nevertheless, up to the age of twenty-five his only drink had been water.⁽¹⁾

"At length, fearful of being punished for a serious outrage on a magistrate,⁽²⁾ he fled from Basil towards the end of the year '27, and took refuge in Alsacia, whither he caused Oporinus to follow with his chymical apparatus.

"He then entered once more upon the career of ambulatory theosophist.* Accordingly we find him at Colmar in 1528; at Nuremberg in 1529; at St. Gall in 1531; at Pfeffers in 1535; and at Augsburg in 1536: he next made some stay in Moravia, where he still further compromised his reputation by the loss of many distinguished patients, which compelled him to take himself to Vienna; from thence he passed into Hungary; and in 1538 was at Villach, where he dedicated his 'Chronicle' to the States of Carinthia, in gratitude for the many kindnesses with which they had honoured his father. Finally, from Mindelheim, which he visited in 1540, Paracelsus proceeded to Salzburg, where he died in the Hospital of St. Stephen (*Sebastian* is meant), Sept. 24, 1541."—(Here follows a criticism on his writings, which I omit.)

(1) *Paracelsus* would seem to be a fantastic version of *Von Hohenheim*; Einsiedeln is the Latin *Eremus*, whence Paracelsus is sometimes called, as in the correspondence of Erasmus, *Eremita: Bombast*, his proper name, originally acquired from the characteristic phraseology of his lectures, that unlucky signification which it has ever since retained.

(2) Then Bishop of Spanheim, and residing at Würzburg in Franconia; a town situated in a grassy fertile country, whence its name, *Herbipolis*. He was much visited there by learned men, as may be seen by his *Epistole Familiares*. *Hag.* 1536. Among others, by his staunch friend Cornelius Agrippa, to whom he dates thence, in 1510, a letter in answer to the dedicatory epistle prefixed to the treatise *de Occult. Philosoph.*, which last contains the following ominous allusion to Agrippa's sojourn: "Quum nuper tecum, R. P. in cenobio tuo apud Herbipolim aliquamdiu conversatus, multa de chymicis, multa de magicis, multa de cabalisticis, cæterisque quæ adhuc in occulto delitescunt, arcanis scientiis atque artibus unâ contulissetus," &c. &c.

(3) "Inexplebilis illa aviditas nature perserutandi secreta et reconditarum supellecstile scientiarum animum locupletandi, uno

* "So migratory a life could afford Paracelsus but little leisure for application to books, and accordingly he informs us that for the space of ten years he never opened a single volume, and that his whole medical library was not composed of six sheets: in effect, the inventory drawn up after his death states that the only books which he left were the Bible, the New Testament, the Commentaries of St. Jerome on the Gospels, a printed volume on Medicine, and seven manuscripts."

eodemque loco, diu persistere non patiebatur, sed mercurii instar, omnes terras, nationes et urbes perlustrandi igniculos supponebat et cum viris naturae scrutatoribus, chymicis praesertim, ore tellus conferret, et quæ diuturnis laboribus nocturnisque vigiliis invenierant unâ vel alterâ communicatione obtineret."—*Bitiskius in Prefat.* "Patris auxilio primum, deinde propriâ industriâ doctissimos viros in Germaniâ, Italiâ, Galliâ, Hispaniâ, aliisque Europæ regionibus, nactus est preceptores; quorum liberali doctrinâ, et potissimum propriâ inquisitione ut qui esset ingenio acutissimo afferre divino, tantum profecit, ut multi testati sint, in universâ philosophiâ, tam ardua, tam arcana et abdita eruisse mortalium neminem."—*Melch. Adam. in Vit. Germ. Medic.* "Paracelsus qui in intima naturæ viscera sic penitus introierit, metallorum stirpiumque vires et facultates tam incredibili ingenio acumine explorâ verit ac perviderit; ad morbos omnes vel desperatos et opinione hominum insanabiles percurrandum; ut cum Theophraste nata primum medicina perfectaque videtur."—*Petri Rami Orat. de Basileâ.* His passion for wandering is best described in his own words: "Ecce amatorem adolescentem difficillimi itineris haud piget, ut venustam saltem puellam vel foeminam aspiciat: quanto minus nobilissimarum artium amore laboris ac ejuslibet tediis pugebit?" &c.—*Defensiones Septem adversus Emulos suos.* 1573. *Dcf. 4ta. De peregrinationibus et exilio.*"

(4) The reader may remember that it was in conjunction with Ecolampadius, then Divinity-Professor at Basil, that Zwinglius published, in 1528, an answer to Luther's Confession of Faith; and that both proceeded in company to the subsequent conference with Luther and Melancthon at Marpurg. Their letters fill a large volume.—*D. D. Johannis Ecolampadii et Huldrichi Zwingli Epistolarum lib. quatuor. Bas.* 1536. It must be also observed, that Zwinglius began to preach in 1516, and at Zurich in 1519, and that in 1525 the mass was abolished in the cantons. The tenets of Ecolampadius were supposed to be more evangelical than those up to that period maintained by the glorious German, and our brave Bishop Fisher attacked them as the fouler heresy:—"About this time arose out of Luther's school one Ecolampadius, like a mighty and fierce giant; who, as his master had gone beyond the Church, went beyond his master (or else it had been impossible he could have been reputed the better scholar) who denied the real presence: him, this worthy champion (the Bishop) sets upon, and with five books (like so many smooth stones taken out of the river that doth always run with living water) slays the Philistine; which five books were written in the year of our Lord 1526, at which time he had governed the See of Rochester 20 years."—*Life of Bp. Fisher.* 1655. Now, there is no doubt of the Protestantism of Paracelsus, Erasmus, Agricola, &c., but the nonconformity of Paracelsus was always scandalous. L. Crasso (*Elogj d'Huomini Letterati. Ven.* 1666) informs us that his books were excommunicated by the Church. Quensleit (*de Patr. Doct.*) affirms "nec tantum novæ medicinæ, verum etiam novæ theologie autor est." Dolrio, in his *Disquisit. Magicar. classes* him among those "partim atheos, partim hæreticos" (*lib. 1. cap.*

3.) "Omnino tamen multa theologica in ejusdem scriptis planè atheismum olen, ac duriusculè sonant in auribus vero Christiaui."—*D. Gabrielis Claudiari Schediasma de Tinct. Univ. Norimb. 1736.* I shall only add one more authority—"Oporinus dicit se (Paracelsum) aliquando Lutherum et Papam, non minus quam nunc Galenum et Hippocratem redacturum in ordinem minabatur, neque enim eorum qui hactenus in scripturam sacram scripsissent, sive veteres, sive resentiores, quenquam scripturæ nucleus rectè eruisse, sed circa corticem et quasi membruam tantum hærere."—*Th. Erastus. Disputat. d. Med. Novâ.* These and similar notions had their due effect on Oporinus, who, says Zuingerus, in his *Theatrum*, "longum vale dixit ei (Paracelso) ne ob præceptoris, alioqui amicissimi, horrendas blasphemias ipse quoque aliquando poenas Deo. Opt. Max. lueret."

(5) His defenders allow the drunkenness. Take a sample of their excuses: "Gentis hoc, non viri vitium est, a Taciti seculo ad nostrum usque non interrupto filo devolutum, sinceritati forte Germanæ coœvum, et nescio an aliquo consanguinitatis vinculo junctum."—*Bitiskius.* The other charges were chiefly trumped up by Oporinus: "Domi, quod Oporinus amauensis ejus sèpè narravit, nunquam nisi potus ad explicanda sua accessit, atque in medio conclavi ad columnam τετυφωμένος adsistens, appreheenso manibus capulo ensis, cuius κολώνα hospitium præbuit ut aiunt spiritui familiari, imaginaciones aut concepta sua protulit:—alii illud quod in capulo habuit, ab ipso Azoth appellatum Medicinam fuisse præstantissimam aut lapidem Philosophicum putant."—*Melch. Adam.* This famous sword was no laughing matter in those days, and is now a material feature in the popular idea of Paracelsus. I recollect a couple of allusions to it in our own literature, at the moment.

No had been known the Danish Gonswart,
Or Paracelsus with his long sword.
Vulpone. Act ii. sc. 2.

Bumbastus kept a Devil's bird
Shut in the pommel of his sword,
That taught him all the cunning pranks,
Of past and future mountebanks.

Hudibras. Part ii. Cant 3

This Azoth was simply "*laudanum suum.*" But in his time he was commonly believed to possess the double tincture—the power of curing diseases, and transmuting metals. Oporinus often witnessed, as he declares, both these effects, as did also Franciscus, the servant of Paracelsus, who describes, in a letter to Neander, a successful projection at which he was present, and the results of which, good golden ingots, were confided to his keeping. For the other quality, let the following notice vouch among many others:—"Degebat Theophrastus Norimberga prociscus à Medentibus illius urbis, et vaniloquus deceptorque proclamatus, qui, ut laboranti famæ subveniat, viros quosdam authoritatis summæ in Reipublica illâ adit, et infamiae amoliendæ, artique suæ asserendæ, specimen ejus pollicetur editurum, nullo stipendio vel accepto pretio, horum

faciles præbentium aures jussu elephantiacos aliquot, à communione hominum cæterorum segregatos, et in valetudinarium detrusos, alieno arbitrio eliguntur, quos virtute singulari remediorum suorum Theophrastus à fœdâ Græcorum leprâ mundat, pristinæque sanitati restitut; conservat illustre harum curationum urbs in archivis suis testimonium."—*Bitiskius.** It is to be remarked that Oporinus afterward repented of his treachery: "Sed resipuit tandem, et quem vivum convitiis insectatus fuerat defunctum veneratione prosequutus, infames famæ præceptoris morsus in remorsus conscientiæ conversi pœnitentiâ, heu nimis tardâ vulnera clausere exanimi quæ spiranti inflixerant." For these "bites" of Oporinus, see "*Disputat. Erasti,*" and Andreas Jociscus "*Oratio de rit. et. ob. Opori;* ;" for the "remorse," *Mic. Toxita in pref. Testameti*, and Conringius (otherwise an enemy of Paracelsus), who says it was contained in a letter from Oporinus to Doctor Vegerus.†

Whatever the moderns may think of these marvellous attributes, the title of Paracelsus to be considered the father of modern chemistry is indisputable. Gerardus Vossius "*De Philosâ. et Philcsum. sectis,*" thus prefaces the ninth section of *Cap. 9, "De Chymia"*—"Nobilem hanc medicinae partem, diu sepultam avorum ietate quasi ab ore revocavit Th. Paracelsus." I suppose many hints lie scattered in his neglected books, which clever appropriators have since developed with applause. Thus, it appears from his treatise "*De I'hebotomiâ,*" and elsewhere, that he had discovered the circulation of the blood and the sanguification of the heart; as did after him Realda Colombo, and still more perfectly Andrea Cesalpino of Arezzo, as Bayle and Bartoli observe. Even Lavater quotes a passage from his work, "*De naturâ Rerum,*" on practical Physiognomy, in which the definitions and axioms are precise enough: he adds, "though an astrological enthusiast, a man of prodigious genius." See Holcroft's Translation, vol. iii. p. 179—"The Eyes." While on the subject of the writings of Paracelsus, I may explain a passage in the third part of the Poem. He was, as I have said, unwilling to publish his works, but in effect did publish a vast number. Valentius (*in Praefat. in Paramyr.*) declares "quod ad librorum Paracelsi copiam attinet, audio à Germanis prope trecentos recenseri." "O fecunditas ingenii!" adds he, appositely. Many of these were, however, spurious; and Fred. Bitiskius gives his good edition (3 vols. fol. Gen. 1658) "rejectis suppositas solo ipsius nomine superbientibus quorum ingens circumfertur numerus." The rest were "charissimum et pretiosissimum authoris pignus, extorsum potius ab illo quam

* The premature death of Paracelsus casts no manner of doubt on the fact of his having possessed the Elixir Vita: the alchemists have abundant reasons to adduce, from which I select the following, as explanatory of a property of the Tincture not calculated on by its votaries: "Objectionem illam, quod Paracelsus non fuerit longævus, nonnulli quoque solvunt per rationes physicas: vita nimiri ab abbreviationem fortasse tabulus accidere posse, ob Tincturam frequenter ac largiore dosi sumtam, dum a summe efficaci et penetrabilis hujus virtute calor innatus quasi suffocatur."—*Gabrilis Claudi Schediasma.*

† For a good defence of Paracelsus I refer the reader to Olaus Borrichius treatise—*"Hermetis &c, sapientia vindicata. 1674."* Or, if he is no more learned than myself in such matters, I had better mention simply that Paracelsus introduced the use of Mercury and Laudanum.

obtentum." "Jam minime eo volente atque jubento hæc ipsius scripta in lucem prodiisse videntur; quippe quæ muro inclusa ipso absente servi cuiusdem indicio, furto surrepta atque sublata sunt," says Valentius. These have been the study of a host of commentators, among whose labours are most notable, Petri Severini, *Idea Medicinae Philosophiae. Bas.* 1571; Mic. Toxetis, *Onomastica. Arg.* 1574; Dornei, *Dict. Parac. Franc.* 1581; and Pi. Philose. *Compendium cum scholiis auctore Leone Suario. Paris.* (This last, a good book.)

(6) A disgraceful affair. One Liechtenfels, a canon, having been rescued in *extremis* by tho "laudanum" of Paracelsus, refused the stipulated fee, and was supported in his meanness by the authorities, whose interference Paracelsus would not brook. His own liberality was allowed by his bitterest foes, who found a ready solution of his indifference to profit, in the afore-said sword-handle and its guest. His freedom from the besetting sin of a profession he abhorred—(as he curiously says somewhere, "Quis queso deinceps honorem deferat professione tali, quæ à tam facinorosis nebulonibus oblitus et administratur?")—is recorded in his epitaph, which affirms—"Bona sua in pauperes distribuenda collocandaque erogavit," honoravit, or ordinavit—for account; differ.

PIPPA PASSES.

A Drama.

I DEDICATE

MY BEST INTENTIONS, IN THIS POEM, MOST ADMIRINGLY TO THE
AUTHOR OF "ION,"—

MOST AFFECTIONATELY TO

MR. SERJEANT TALFOURD

R. B.

PIPPA PASSES.

NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE TREVISAN.—*A large, mean, airy chamber. A girl, PIPPA, from the silk-mills, springing out of bed.*

DAY!

Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last ;
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurting and suppress it lay—
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid gray
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away ;
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppress
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the world.

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,
A mite of my twelve-hours' treasure,
The least of thy gazes or glances,
(Be they grants thou art bound to, or gifts above measure,)
One of thy choices, or one of thy chances,
(Be they tasks God imposed thee, or freaks at thy pleasure)
—My Day, if I squander such labour or leisure,
Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me !

Thy long blue solemn hours serenely flowing,
Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help and good—
Thy fitful sunshine minutes, coming, going,
In which, earth turns from work in gamesome mood—
All shall be mine ! But thou must treat me not
As the prosperous are treated, those who live
At hand here, and enjoy the higher lot,
In readiness to take what thou wilt give,

And free to let alone what thou refusest ;
 For, Day, my holiday, if thou ill-usest
 Me, who am only Pippa—old-year's sorrow,
 Cast off last night, will come again to-morrow—
 Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall borrow
 Sufficient strength of thee for new-year's sorrow.
 All other men and women that this earth
 Belongs to, who all days alike possess,
 Make general plenty cure particular dearth,
 Get more joy, one way, if another, less :
 Thou art my single day, God lends to leaven
 What were all earth else, with a feel of heaven ;
 Sole light that helps me through the year, thy sun's !
 Try, now ! Take Asolo's Four Happiest Ones—
 And let thy morning rain on that superb
 Great haughty Ottima ; can rain disturb
 Her Sebald's homage ? All the while thy rain
 Beats fiercest on her shrub-house window-pane,
 He will but press the closer, breathe more warm
 Against her cheek ; how should she mind the storm ?
 And, morning past, if mid-day shed a gloom
 O'er Jules and Phene,—what care bride and groom
 Save for their dear selves ? 'Tis their marriage-day ;
 And while they leave church, and go home their way,
 Hand clasping hand,—within each breast would be
 Sunbeams and pleasant weather spite of thee !
 Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve
 With mist,—will Luigi and his mother grieve—
 The Lady and her child, unmatched, forsooth,
 She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,
 For true content ? The cheerful town, warni, close,
 And safe, the sooner that thou art morose
 Receives them ! And yet once again, outbreak
 In storm at night on Monsignor, they make
 Such stir about,—whom they expect from Rome
 To visit Asolo, his brother's home, .
 And say here masses proper to release
 A soul from pain,—what storm dares hurt his peace ?
 Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts to ward
 Thy thunder off, nor want the angels' guard !
 But Pippa—just one such mischance would spoil
 Her day that lightens the next twelvemonth's toil
 At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil !
 And here I let time slip for nought !
 Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam—caught
 With a single splash from my ewer !
 You that would mock the best pursuer,
 Was my basin over-deep ?

One splash of water ruins you asleep,
 And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits
 Wheeling and counterwheeling,
 Reeling, broken beyond healing—
 Now grow together on the ceiling !
 That will task your wits !
 Whoever quenched fire first, hoped to see
 Morsel after morsel flee
 As merrily, as giddily
 Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,
 Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple ?
 Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon ?
 New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,
 Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk bird's poll !
 Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple
 Of ocean, bud there,—fairies watch unroll
 Such turban-flowers ; I say, such lamps disperse
 Thick red flame through that dusk green universe !

I am queen of thee, floweret ;
 And each fleshy blossom
 Preserve I not—(safer
 Than leaves that embower it,
 Or shells that embosom)
 —From weevil and chafer ?
 Laugh through my pane, then ; solicit the bee ;
 Gibe him, be sure ; and, in midst of thy glee,
 Love thy queen, worship me !

—Worship whom else ? For am I not, this day,
 Whate'er I please ? What shall I please to-day ?
 My morning, noon, eve, night—how spend my day ?
 To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,
 The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk :
 But, this one day, I have leave to go,
 And play out my fancy's fullest games ;
 I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—.
 That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names
 Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo !

See ! Up the Hill-side yonder, through the morning,
 Some one shall love me, as the world calls love :
 I am no less than Ottima, take warning !
 The gardens, and the great stone house above,
 And other house for shrubs, all glass in front
 Are mine ; where Sebald steals, as he is wont
 To court me, while old Luca yet reposes ;
 And therefore, till the shrub-house door uncloses

I . . . what, now?—give abundant cause for prate
 About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,
 Too bold, too confident, she 'll still face down
 The spitefullest of talkers in our town—
 How we talk in the little town below!
 But love, love, love—there 's better love, I know!
 This foolish love was only day's first offer;
 I choose my next love to defy the scoffier:
 For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally
 Out of Possagno church at noon?
 Their house looks over Orcana valley—
 Why should I not be the bride as soon
 As Ottima? For I saw, beside,
 Arrive last night that little bride—
 Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash
 Of the pale, snow-pure cheek and black bright tresses,
 Blacker than all except the black eyelash;
 I wonder she contrives those lids no dresses!
 —So strict was she, the veil
 Should cover close her pale
 Pure cheeks—a bride to look at and scarce touch,
 Scarce touch, remember, Jules!—for are not such
 Used to be tended, flower-like, every feature,
 As if one's breath would fray the lily of a creature?
 A soft and easy life these ladies lead!
 Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed—
 Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,
 Keep that foot its lady primness,
 Let those ancles never swerve
 From their exquisite reserve
 Yet have to trip along the streets like me,
 All but naked to the kneec!
 How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss
 So startling as her real first infant kiss?
 Oh, no—not envy, this!
 —Not envy, sure!—for if you gave me
 Leave to take or to refuse,
 In earnest, do you think I 'd choose
 That sort of new love to enslave me?
 Mine should have lapped me round from the beginning
 As little fear of losing it as winning!
 Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their wives,
 And only parents' love can last our lives:
 At eve, the son and mother, gentle pair,
 Commune inside our Turret; what prevents
 My being Luigi? while that mossy lair
 Of lizards through the winter-time is stirred
 With each to each imparting sweet intents

For this new-year, as brooding bird to bird—
 (For I observe of late, the evening walk
 Of Luigi and his mother always ends
 Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,
 Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than friends)
 Let me be cared about, keep out of harm,
 And schemed for, safe in love as with a charm;
 Let me be Luigi! . . . If I only knew
 What was my mother's face—my father too!

Nay, if you come to that, best love of all
 Is God's; then why not have God's love befall
 Myself as, in the Palace by the Dome,
 Monsignor?—who to-night will bless the home
 Of his dead brother; and God will bless in turn
 That heart which beats, those eyes which mildly burn
 With love for all men: I, to-night at least,
 Would be that holy and beloved priest!

Now wait!—even I already seem to share
 In God's love: what does New-year's hymn declare?
 What other meaning do these verses bear?

All service ranks the same with God:
If now, as formerly He trod
Paradise, His presence fills
Our earth, each only as God wills
Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,
Are we; there is no last nor first.

Say not "a small event!" Why "small?"
Costs it more pain than this, ye call
A "great event," should come to pass,
Than that? Untwine me from the mass
Of deeds which make up life, one deed
Power shall fall short in, or exceed!

And more of it, and more of it!—oh, yes—
 I will pass by, and see their happiness,
 And envy none—being just as great, no doubt,
 Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!
 A pretty thing to care about
 So mightily, this single holiday!

But let the sun shine! Wherefore repine?
 —With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,
 Down the grass-path grey with dew,
 Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,
 Where the swallow never flew
 As yet, nor cicale dared carouse—
 Dared carouse! [She enters the street.]

I.—MORNING. *Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house.*
**LUCA'S Wife, OTTIMA, and her Paramour, the German
 SEBALD.**

*Seb. (sings.) Let the watching lids wink !
 Day's a-blaze with eyes, think—
 Deep into the night, drink !*

*Otti. Night ? Such may be your Rhine-land nights,
 perhaps ;
 But this blood-red beam through the shutter's chink,
 —We call such light, the morning's : let us see !
 Mind how you grope your way though ! How these tall
 Naked geraniums straggle ! Push the lattice—
 Behind that frame !—Nay, do I bid you ?—Sebald,
 It shakes the dust down on me ! Why, of course
 The slide-bolt catches.—Well, are you content,
 Or must I find you something else to spoil ?
 Kiss and be friends, my Sebald ! Is it full morning ?
 Oh, don't speak then !*

Seb. Ay, thus it used to be !
 Ever your house was, I remember, shut
 Till mid-day—I observed that, as I strolled
 On mornings thro' the vale here : country girls
 Were noisy, washing garments in the brook—
 Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the hills—
 But no, your house was mute, would ope no eye—
 And wisely—you were plotting one thing there,
 Nature, another outside : I looked up—
 Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron bars
 Silent as death, blind in a flood of light ;
 Oh, I remember :—and the peasants laughed
 And said, “The old man sleeps with the young wife !”
 This house was his, this chair, this window—his !

Otti. Ah, the clear morning ! I can see St. Mark's :
 That black streak is the belfry. Stop : Vicenza
 Should lie . . . There's Padua, plain enough, that blue !
 Look o'er my shoulder—follow my finger——

Seb. Morning ?
 It seems to me a night with a sun added :
 Where's dew ? where's freshness ? That bruised plant, I
 bruised
 In getting thro' the lattice yestereve,
 Droops as it did. See, here's my elbow's mark
 In the dust on the sill.

Otti. Oh, shut the lattice, pray !

Seb. Let me lean out. I cannot scent blood here,
Foul as the morn may be—

There, shut the world out !

How do you feel now, Ottima ? There—curse
The world, and all outside ! Let us throw off
This mask : how do you bear yourself ? Let's out
With all of it !

Otti. Best never speak of it.

Seb. Best speak again and yet again of it,
Till words cease to be more than words. "His blood,"
For instance—let those two words mean "His blood"
And nothing more. Notice—I'll say them now,
"His blood."

Otti. Assuredly if I repented
The deed—

Seb. Repent ? who should repent, or why ?
What puts that in your head ? Did I once say
That I repented ?

Otti. No—I said the deed—

Seb. "The deed," and "the event"—just now it was
"Our passion's fruit"—the devil take such cant !
Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,
I am his cut-throat, you are—

Otti. Here is the wine—
I brought it when we left the house above—
And glasses too—wine of both sorts. Black ? white, then ?

Seb. But am not I his cut-throat ? What are you ?

Otti. There, trudges on his business from the Duomo
Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood
And bare feet—always in one place at church,
Close under the stone wall by the south entry ;
I used to take him for a brown cold piece
Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose
To let me pass—at first, I say, I used—
Now—so has that dumb figure fastened on me—
I rather should account the plastcred wall
A piece of him, so chilly does it strike.
This, Sebald ?

Seb. No—the white wine—the white wine !
Well, Ottima, I promised no new year
Should rise on us the ancient shameful way,
Nor does it rise : pour on ! To your black eyes !
Do you remember last damned New Year's day ?

Otti. You brought those foreign prints. We looked at them
Over the wine and fruit. I had to scheme
To get him from the fire. Nothing but saying
His own set wants the proof-mark, roused him up
To hunt them out

Seb. Faith, he is not alive
To fondle you before my face !

Otti. Do you
Fondle me, then ! who means to take your life
For that, my Sebald ?

Seb. Hark you, Ottima,
One thing's to guard against. We'll not make much
One of the other—that is, not make more
Parade of warmth, childish officious coil,
Than yesterday—as if, sweet, I supposed
Proof upon proof was needed now, now first,
To show I love you—yes, still love you—love you
In spite of Luca and what's come to him
—Sure sign we had him ever in our thoughts,
White sneering old reproachful face and all !
We'll even quarrel, love, at times, as if
We still could lose each other—we're not tied
By this—conceive you ?

Otti. Love ---.

Seb. Not tied so sure—
Because tho' I was wrought upon—have struck
His insolence back into him—am I
So surely yours ?—therefore, forever yours ?

Otti. Love, to be wise, (one counsel pays another)
Should we have—months ago—when first we loved,
For instance that May morning we two stole
Under the green ascent of sycamores—
If we had come upon a thing like that
Suddenly—

Seb. "A thing" . . . there again—"a thing!"
Otti. Then, Venus' body, had we come upon
My husband Luca Gaddi's murdered corpse
Within there, at his couch-foot, covered close—
Would you have pored upon it ? Why persist
In poring now upon it ? For 'tis here—
As much as there in the deserted house—
You cannot rid your eyes of it : for me,
Now he is dead I hate him worse—I hate—
Dare you stay here ? I would go back and hold
His two dead hands, and say, I hate you worse
Luca, than—

Seb. Off, off ; take your hands off mine !
'Tis the hot evening—off ! oh, morning, is it ?

Otti. There's one thing must be done—you know what thing.
Come in and help to carry. We may sleep
Anywhere in the whole wide house to-night.

Seb. What would come, think you, if we let him lie
Just as he is ? Let him lie there until

The angels take him : he is turned by this
Off from his face, beside, as you will see.

Otti. This dusty pane might serve for looking-glass.
Three, four—four grey hairs ! Is it so you said
A plait of hair should wave across my neck ?
No—this way !

Seb. Ottima, I would give your neck,
Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts of yours,
That this were undone ! Killing ?—Kill the world
So Luca lives again !—Ay, lives to sputter
His fulsome dotage on you—yes, and feign
Surprise that I returned at eve to sup,
When all the morning I was loitering here
Bid me dispatch my business and begone.
I would—

Otti. See !

Seb. No, I'll finish ! Do you think
I fear to speak the bare truth once for all ?
All we have talked of is, at bottom, fine
To suffer—there 's a recompense in guilt ;
One must be venturous and fortunate—
What is one young for, else ? In age we'll sigh
O'er the wild, reckless, wicked days flown over ;
Still we have lived ! The vice was in its place.
But to have eaten Luca's bread, have worn
His clothes, have felt his money swell my purse—
Do lovers in romances sin that way ?
Why, I was starving when I used to call
And teach you music—starving while you plucked me
These flowers to smell !

Otti. My poor lost friend !

Seb. He gave me
Life—nothing less : what if he did reproach
My perfidy, and threaten, and do more—
Had he no right ? What was to wonder at ?
He sate by us at table quietly—
Why must you lean across till our cheeks touch'd ?
Could he do less than make pretence to strike me ?
Tis not for the crime's sake—I 'd commit ten crimes
Greater, to have this crime wiped out—undone !
And you—O, how feel you ? feel you for me ?
Otti. Well, then—I love you better now than ever—
And best (look at me while I speak to you)—
Best for the crime—nor do I grieve, in truth,
This mask, this simulated ignorance,
This affectation of simplicity,
Falls off our crime ; this naked crime of ours
May not, now, be looked over—look it down then !

Great? let it be great—but the joys it brought,
 Pay they or no its price? Come—they or it!
 Speak not! The past, would you give up the past
 Such as it is, pleasure and crime together?
 Give up that noon I owned my love for you—
 The garden's silence—even the single bee
 Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopt,
 And where he hid you only could surmise
 By some campanula's chalice set a-swing
 As he clung there—"Yes, I love you!"

Seb. And I drew
 Back; put far back your face with both my hands
 Lest you should grow too full of me—your face
 So seemed athirst for my whole soul and body!

Otti. And when I ventured to receive you here,
 Made you steal hither in the mornings—

Seb. When
 I used to look np 'neath the shrub-house here,
 Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread
 To a yellow haze?

Otti. Ah—my sigh was the sun,
 Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-tree
 Nipt by the first frost.

Seb. You would always laugh
 At my wet boots—I had to stride thro' grass
 Over my ancles.

Otti. Then our crowning night—

Seb. The July night?

Otti. The day of it too, Sebald!

When the heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed with heat,
 Its black-blue canopy seenied let descend
 Close on us both, to weigh down each to each,
 And smother up all life except our life.
 So lay we till the storm came.

Seb. How it came!

Otti. Buried in woods we lay, you recollect;
 Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;
 And ever and anon some bright white shaft
 Burnt thro' the pine-tree roof—here burnt and there,
 As if God's messenger thro' the close wood screen
 Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,
 Feeling for guilty thee and me: then broke
 The thunder like a whole sea overhead—

Seb. Yes!

Otti. —While I stretched myself upon you, hands
 To hands, my mouth to your hot mouth, and shook
 All my locks loose, and covered you with them—
 You Sebald, the same you—

Seb. Slower, Ottima—

Otti. And as we lay—

Seb. Less vehemently ! Love me—

Forgive me—take not words—mere words—to heart—

Your breath is worse than wine ! Breathe slow, speak slow—

Do not lean on me—

Otti. Sebald, as we lay,

Rising and falling only with our pants,

Who said, “ Let death come now—’tis right to die !

Right to be punished—nought completes such bliss

But woe ! ” Who said that ?

Seb. How did we ever rise ?

Was’t that we slept ? Why did it end ?

Otti. I felt you

Fresh tapering to a point the ruffled ends

Of my loose locks ‘twixt both your humid lips—

(My hair is fallen now—knot it again !)

Seb. I kiss you now, dear Ottima, now, and now !

This way ? Will you forgive me—be once more

My great queen ?

Otti. Bind it thrice upon my brow ;

Crown me your queen, your spirit’s arbitress,

Magnificent in sin. Say that !

Seb. I crown you

My great white queen, my spirit’s arbitress,

Magnificent —

(From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—)

The year’s at the spring,

And day’s at the morn ;

Morning’s at seven ;

The hill-side’s dew-pearled :

The lark’s on the wing ;

The snail’s on the thorn ;

God’s in his heaven—

All’s right with the world !

(*PIPPA passes.*)

Seb. God’s in his heaven ! Do you hear that ? Who spoke ? You, you spoke !

Otti. Oh—that little ragged girl !

She must have rested on the step—we give them

But this one holiday the whole year round.

Did you ever see our silk-mills—their inside ?

There are ten silik mills now belong to you.

She stoops to pick my double heartsease . . . Sh !

She does not hear—you call out louder !

Seb.

Leave me !

Go, get your clothes on—dress those shoulders !

Otti.

Sebald ?

Seb. Wipe off that paint. I hate you !*Otti.*

Miserable .

Seb. My God ! and she is emptied of it now !

Outright now !—how miraculously gone

All of the grace—had she not strange grace once ?

Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it likes,

No purpose holds the features up together,

Only the cloven brow and puckered chin

Stay in their places—and the very hair,

That seemed to have a sort of life in it,

Drops, a dead web !

Otti.

Speak to me—speak not of me !

Seb. —That round great full-orbed face, where not an angle
Broke the delicious indolence—all broken !*Otti.*

To me—not of me !—ungrateful, porjured cheat—

A coward too—but ingrate 's worse than all !

Beggar—my slave—a fawning, cringing lie !

Leave me !—betray me !—I can see your drift—

A lie that walks, and eats, and drinks !

Seb.

My God !

Those morbid, olive, faultless shoulder-blades—

I should have known there was no blood beneath !

Otti.

You hate me, then ? You hate me then ?

Seb.

To think

She would succeed in her absurd attempt,

And fascinate by sinning ; and show herself

Superior—Guilt from its excess, superior

To Innocence. That little peasant's voice

Has righted all again. Though I be lost,

I know which is the better, never fear,

Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,

Nature, or trick—I see what I have done,

Entirely now ! Oh, I am proud to feel

Such torments—let the world take credit thence

I, having done my deed, pay too its price !

I hate, hate—curse you ! God 's in his heaven !

Otti.

—Me!

Me ! no, no, Sebald—not yourself—kill me !

Mine is the whole crime—do but kill me—then

Yourself—then—presently—first hear me speak—

I always meant to kill myself—wait, you !

Lean on my breast—not as a breast ; don't love me

The more because you lean on me, my own

Heart's Sebald ! There—there—both deaths presently !

Seb. My brain is drowned now—quite drowned : all I feel

Is . . . is at swift-recurring intervals,
 A hurrying-down within me, as of waters
 Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit—
 There they go—whirls from a black, fiery sea !
 Otti. Not to me, God—to him be merciful !

Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from the Hill-side to Orcana. Foreign Students of Painting and Sculpture, from Venice, assembled opposite the House of JULES, a young French Statuary.

1st Stud. Attention ! my own post is beneath this window, but the pomegranate clump yonder will hide three or four of you with a little squeezing, and Schramm and his pipe must lie flat in the balcony. Four, five—who's a defaulter ? We want everybody, for Jules must not be suffered to hurt his bride when the jest's found out.

2nd Stud. All here ! Only our poet's away—never having much meant to be present, moonstrike him ! The airs of that fellow, that Giovacchino ! He was in violent love with himself, and had a fair prospect of thriving in his suit, so unmolested was it,—when suddenly a woman falls in love with him too ; and out of pure jealousy he takes himself off to Trieste, immortal poem and all—whereto is this prophetical epitaph appended already, as Bluphocks assures me—“ *Here a mammoth-poem lies.—Fouled to death by butterflies.* ” His own fault, the simpleton ! Instead of cramp couplets, each like a knife in your entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks, both classically and intelligibly :—*Æsculapius, an Epic Catalogue of the drugs : Hebe's plaister—One strip Cools your lip. Phœbus' emulsion—One bottle Clears your throttle. Mercury's bolus—One box Cures . . .*

3rd Stud. Subside, my fine fellow ! If the marriage was over by ten o'clock, Jules will certainly be here in a minute with his bride.

2nd Stud. Good !—Only, so should the poet's muse have been universally acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et canibus nostris . . .* and Delia not better known to our literary dogs than the boy—Giovacchino !

1st Stud. To the point, now. Where's Gottlieb, the newcomer ? Oh,—listen, Gottlieb, to what has called down this piece of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which we now assemble to witness the winding-up. We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe, when Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by-and-by :

I am spokesman—the verses that are to undeceive Jules bear my name of Lutwyche—but each professes himself alike insulted by this strutting stone-squarer, who came singly from Paris to Munich, and thence with a crowd of us to Venice and Possagno here, but proceeds in a day or two alone again—oh, alone, indubitably!—to Rome and Florence. He, forsooth, take up his portion with these dissolute, brutalised, heartless bunglers!—So he was heard to call us all; now, is Schramm brutalised, I should like to know? Am I heartless?

Gott. Why, somewhat heartless; for, suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you choose, still, for this mere coxcombray, you will have brushed off—what do folks style it?—the bloom of his life. Is it too late to alter? These love-letters, now, you call his . . . I can't laugh at them.

4th Stud. Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

Gott. His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

4th Stud. That's the joke. But you should have joined us at the beginning; there's no doubt he loves the girl—loves a model he might hire by the hour!

Gott. See here! “He has been accustomed,” he writes, “to have Canova's women about him, in stone, and the world's women besides him, in flesh; these being as much below, as those above—his soul's aspiration: but now he is to have the real.” . . . There you laugh again! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

1st Stud. Schramm! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody)—will Jules lose the bloom of his youth?

Schramm. Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world: look at a blossom—it drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time; but fruits succeed, and where would be the blossom's place could it continue? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favourite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with—as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find something to look on! Has a man done wondering at women?—There follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men?—There's God to wonder at: and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus . . .

1st Stud. Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again! There you see! Well, this—Jules . . . a wretched fribble—oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the othe·day! Canova's gallery—you know: there he marches first resolutely past

great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye: all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla*—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—“In your new place, beauty? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich—I see you!” Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pietà* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into—I say, into—the group; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova’s practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint—and that, likewise, has he mastered at length! Good-bye, therefore, to poor Canova—whose gallery no longer need detain his successor Jules, the pre-destined novel thinker in marble!

5th Stud. Tell him about the women—go on to the women!

1st Stud. Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least: he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla*. Now I happened to hear of a young Greek—real Greek—girl at Malamocco; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron’s “hair like sea-moss”—Schramm knows!—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest,—a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three lire an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So, first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the academy, and my picture was nothing to it—a profound admirer bade him persevere—would make herself known to him ere long—(Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice*, transcribes divinely). And in due time the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained her name too—Phene, which is by interpretation sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his mistress: and fancy us over these letters, two, three times a day, to receive and dispatch! I concocted the main of it; relations were in the way—secrecy must be observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St—st—Here they come!

6th Stud. Both of them! Heaven’s love, speak softly! speak within yourselves!

5th Stud. Look at the bridegroom! Half his hair in storm, and half in calm,—patted down over the left temple,—like a

frothy cup one blows on to cool it ! and the same old blouse
that he murders the marble in !

2d Stud. Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy !—
rich, that your face may the better set it off !

6th Stud. And the bride ! Yes, sure enough, our Phene !
Should you have known her in her clothes ? How magnificently
pale !

Gott. She does not also take it for earnest, I hope ?

1st Stud. Oh, Natalia's concern, that is ! We settle with
Natalia.

6th Stud. She does not speak—has evidently let out no
word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest
of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are
to break the secret to Jules ?

Gott. How he gazes on her ! Pity—pity !

1st Stud. They go in—now, silence ! You three,—not nearer
the window, mind, than that pomegranate—just where the
little girl, who a few minutes ago passed us singing, is seated !

**II.—Noon. Over Orcana. The House of JULES, who crosses
its threshold with PHENE—she is silent, on which JULES
begins—**

Do not die, Phene—I am yours now—you
Are mine now—let fate reach me how she likes,
If you 'll not die—so, never die ! Sit here—
My work-room's single seat : I over-lean
This length of hair and lustrous front—they turn
Like an entire flower upward—eyes—lips—last
Your chin—no, last your throat turns—'tis their scent
Pulls down my face upon you ! Nay, look ever
This one way till I change, grow you—I could
Change into you, beloved !

You by me,
And I by you—this is your hand in mine—
And side by side we sit : all 's true. Thank God !
I have spoken—speak, you !

—O, my life to come !
My Tydeus must be carved, that 's there in clay :
Yet how be carved, with you about the chamber ?
Where must I place you ? When I think that once
This room-full of rough block-work seemed my heaven
Without you ! Shall I ever work again—
Get fairly into my ol' ways again—

Bid each conception stand while, trait by trait,
My hand transfers its lineaments to stone ?
Will my mere fancies live near you, my truth—
The live truth—passing and repassing me—
Sitting beside me ?

Now speak !

Only, first,
See, all your letters ! Was 't not well contrived ?
Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe ; she keeps
Your letters next her skin : which drops out foremost ?
Ah,—this that swam down like a first moonbeam
Into my world !

Again those eyes complete
Their melancholy survey, sweet and slow,
Of all my room holds ; to return and rest
On me, with pity, yet some wonder too—
As if God bade some spirit plague a world,
And this were the one moment of surprise
And sorrow while she took her station, pausing
O'er what she sees, finds good, and must destroy !
What gaze you at ? Those ? Books, I told you of ;
Let your first word to me rejoice them too :
This minion, a Coluthus, writ in red
Bistre and azure by Bessarion's scribe—
Read this line . . no, shame, Homer's be the Greek
First breathed me from the lips of my Greek girl !
My Odyssey in coarse black vivid type
With faded yellow blossoms 'twixt page and page,
To mark great places with due gratitude ;
“ *He said, and on Antinous directed*
“ *A bitter shaft* ” . . . a flower blots out the rest !
Again upon your search ? My statues, then !
—Ah, do not mind that—better that will look
When cast in bronze—an Almaign Kaiser, that,
Swart-green and gold, with truncheon based on hip.
This, rather, turn to ! What, unrecognised ?
I thought you would have seen that here you sit
As I imagined you,—Hippolyta,
Naked upon her bright Numidian horse !
Recall you this, then ? “ Carve in bold relief ”—
So you commanded—“ carve, against I come,
“ A Greek, in Athens, as our fashion was,
“ Feasting, bay-filleted and thunder-free,
“ Who rises 'neath the lifted myrtle-branch :
“ ‘ *Praise those who slew Hipparchus,* ’ cry the guests,
“ ‘ *While o'er thy head the singer's myrtle waves*
“ ‘ *As erst above our champions' : stand up, all !* ’ ”
See, I have laboured to express your thought !

Quite round, a cluster of mere hands and arms,
 (Thrust in all senses, all ways, from all sides,
 Only consenting at the branches' end
 They strain toward) serves for frame to a sole face—
 The Praiser's—in the centre—who with eyes
 Sightless, so bend they back to light inside
 His brain where visionary forms throng up,
 Sings, minding not that palpitating arch
 Of hands and arms, nor the quick drip of wine
 From the drenched leaves o'erhead, nor crowns cast off,
 Violet and parsley crowns to trample on—
 Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts approve,
 Devoutly their unconquerable hymn !
 But you must say a " well " to that—say. " well ! "
 Because you gaze—am I fantastic, sweet ?
 Gaze like my very life's-stuff, marble—marbly
 Even to the silence ! why before I found
 'The real flesh Phene, I inured myself
 To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff
 For better nature's birth by means of art :
 With me, each substance tended to one form
 Of beauty—to the human Archetype—
 On every side occurred suggestive germs
 Of that—the tree, the flower—or take the fruit,—
 Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,
 Curved beewise o'er its bough ; as rosy limbs,
 Depending, nestled in the leaves—and just
 From a cleft rose-peach the whole Dryad sprang !
 But of the stuffs one can be master of,
 How I divined their capabilities !
 From the soft-rinded smoothening facile chalk
 That yields your outline to the air's embrace,
 Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom ;
 Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure
 To cut its one confided thought clean out
 Of all the world : but marble !—'neath my tools
 More pliable than jelly—as it were
 Some clear primordial creature dug from depths
 In the Earth's heart, where itself breeds itself,
 And whence all baser substance may be worked ;
 Refine it off to air, you may—condense it
 Down to the diamond ;—is not metal there,
 When o'er the sudden specks my chisel trips ?
 —Not flesh—as flake off flake I scale, approach,
 Lay bare those bluish veins of blood asleep ?
 Lurks flame in no strange windings where, surprised
 By the swift implement sent home at once,
 Flushes and glowings radiate and hover

About its track ?—

Phene ? what—why is this ?
That whitening cheek, those still-dilating eyes !
Ah, you will die—I knew that you would die !

[PHENE begins, on his having long remained silent.]

Now the end's coming—to be sure, it must
Have ended sometime ! Tush—why need I speak
Their foolish speech ? I cannot bring to mind
One-half of it, besides ; and do not care
For old Natalia now, nor any of them.
Oh, you—what are you ?—if I do not try
To say the words Natalia made me learn,
To please your friends,—it is to keep myself
Where your voice lifted me, by letting it
Proceed—but can it ? Even you, perhaps,
Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,
The music's life, and me along with that—
No, or you would ! We'll stay, then, as we are
—Above the world.

You creature with the eyes !

If I could look for ever up to them,
As now you let me,—I believe all sin,
All memory of wrong done or suffering borne,
Would drop down, low and lower, to the earth
Whence all that's low comes, and there touch and stay
—Never to overtake the rest of me,
All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,
Drawn by those eyes ! What rises is myself,
Not so the shame and suffering ; but they sink,
Are left, I rise above them—Keep me so
Above the world !

But you sink, for your eyes
Are altering—altered ! Stay—“ I love you, love you ” . . .
I could prevent it if I understood
More of your words to me—was 't in the tone
Or the words, your power ?

Or stay—I will repeat
Their speech, if that contents you ! Only, change
No more, and I shall find it presently
—Far back here, in the brain yourself filled up.
Natalia threatened me that harm would follow
Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,
But harm to me, I thought she meant, not you.
Your friends,—Natalia said they were your friends
And meant you well,—because, I doubted it.
Observing (what was very strange to see)
On every face, so different in all else,

The same smile girls like us are used to bear,
 But never men, men cannot stoop so low ;
 Yet your friends, speaking of you, used that smile,
 That hateful smirk of boundless self-conceit
 Which seems to take possession of this world
 And make of God their tame confederate,
 Purveyor to their appetites . . . you know !
 But no—Natalia said they were your friends,
 And they assented while they smiled the more,
 And all came round me,—that thin Englishman
 With light, lank hair seemed leader of the rest ;
 He held a paper—“ What we want,” said he,
 Ending some explanation to his friends—
 “ Is something slow, involved and mystical,
 “ To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his taste
 “ And lure him on, so that, at innermost
 “ Where he seeks sweetness’ soul, he may find—this !
 “ —As in the apple’s core, the noisome fly :
 “ For insects on the rind are seen at once,
 “ And brushed aside as soon, but this is found
 “ Only when on the lips or loathing tongue.”
 And so he read what I have got by heart—
 I’ll speak it,—“ Do not die, love ! I am yours ” . . .
 Stop—is not that, or like that, part of words
 Yourself began by speaking ? Strange to lose
 What cost much pains to learn ! Is this more right ?

*I am a painter who cannot paint ;
 In my life, a devil rather than saint,
 In my brain, as poor a creature too—
 No end to all I cannot do !
 Yet do one thing at least I can—
 Love a man, or hate a man
 Supremely : thus my love began.
 Through the Valley of Love I went,
 In its lovingest spot to abide,
 And just on the verge where I pitched my tent,
 I found Hate dwelling beside.
 Let the Bridegroom ask what the painter meant,
 Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride !)
 And further, I traversed Hate’s grove,
 In its hatefuller nook to dwell ;
 But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched Love
 Where the deepest shadow fell.
 (The meaning—those black bride’s eyes above,
 Not the painter’s lips should tell !)*

“ And here,” said he, “ Jules probably will ask,
 “ You have black eyes, love,—you are, sure enough,

*.. My peerless bride,—so do you tell, indeed,
“ What needs some explanation—what means this ? ”*

—And I am to go on, without a word—

*So I grew wiser in Love and Hate
From simple, that I was of late.
For once, when I loved, I would enlace
Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and face
Of her I loved, in one embrace—
As if by mere love I could love immensely !
And when I hated, I would plunge
My sword, and wipe with the first lunge
My foe's whole life out, like a sponge—
As if by mere hate I could hate intensely !
But now I am wiser, know better the fashion
How passion seeks aid from its opposite passion,
And if I see cause to love more, or hate more
That ever man loved, ever hated, before—
And seek in the Valley of Love,
The spot, or the spot in Hate's Grove,
Where my soul may the sureliest reach
The essence, nought less, of each,
The Hate of all Hates, or the Love
Of all Loves, in its Valley or Grove,—
I find them the very warders
Each of the other's borders,
I love most, when Love is disguised
In Hate ; and when Hate is surprised
In Love, then I hate most : ask
How Love smiles through Hate's iron casque,
Hate grins through Love's rose-braided mask,—
And how, having hated thee,
I sought long and painfully
To wound thee, and not prick
The skin, but pierce to the quick—
Ask this, my Jules, and be answered straight
By thy bride—how the painter Lutwyche can hate !*

JULES interposes.

Lutwyche—who else ? But all of them, no doubt,
Hated me : they at Venice—presently
Their turn, however ! You I shall not meet :
If I dreamed, saying this would wake me !

Keep

What's here, this gold—we cannot meet again,
Consider—and the money was but meant
For two years' travel, which is over now,
All chance, or hope, or care, or need of it !
This, and what comes from selling these, my casts

And books, and medals, except . . . let them go
 Together, so the produce keeps you safe,
 Out of Natalia's clutches!—If by chance
 (For all's chance here) I should survive the gang
 At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,
 We might meet somewhere, since the world is wide—

(*From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—*

Give her but least excuse to love me!

When—where—

*How—can this arm establish her above me,
 If fortune fixed her as my lady there,
 There already, to eternally reprove me?*

(“Hist”—said Kate the queen;
 But “Oh”—cried the maiden, binaing her tresses,
 “Tis only a page that carols unseen
 “Crumbling your hounds their messes!”)

*Is she wronged?—To the rescue of her honour,
 My heart!*

*Is she poor?—What costs it to be styled a donor?
 Merely an earth's to cleave, a sea's to part!
 But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!*
 (“Nay, list,”—bade Kate the queen;
 And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
 “Tis only a page that carols unseen
 “Fitting your hawks their jesses!”)

(*PIPPA passes.*)

JULES resumes.

What name was that the little girl sang forth?
 Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who renounced
 The crown of Cyprus to be lady here
 At Asolo, where still the peasants keep
 Her memory; and songs tell how many a page
 Pined for the grace of one so far above
 His power of doing good to, as a queen—
 “She never could be wronged, be poor,” he sighed,
 “For him to help her!”

Yes, a bitter thing
 To see our lady above all need of us;
 Yet so we look ere we will love; not I,
 But the world looks so. If whoever loves
 Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,
 The blessing or the blest one, queen or page,
 Why should we always choose the page's part?
 Here is a woman with utter need of me,—
 I find myself queen here, it seems!

How strange !

Look at the woman here with the new soul,
 Like my own Psyche's,—fresh upon her lips:
 Alit, the visionary butterfly,
 Waiting my word to enter and make bright,
 Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.
 This body had no soul before, but slept
 Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly, free
 From taint or foul with stain, as outward things
 Fastened their image on its passiveness :
 Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die again !
 Shall to produce form out of unshaped stuff
 Be art—and, further, to evoke a soul
 From form, be nothing ? This new soul is mine !

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that do ?—save
 A wretched dauber, men will hoot to death
 Without me, from their laughter !—Oh, to hear
 God's voice plain as I heard it first, before
 They broke in with that laughter ! I heard them
 Henceforth, not God !

To Ancona—Greece—some isle !

I wanted silence only—there is clay
 Everywhere. One may do whate'er one likes
 In Art—the only thing is, to make sure
 That one does like it—which takes pains to know.

Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad dream !
 Who—what is Lutwyche—what Natalia's friends,
 What the whole world except our love—my own,
 Own Phene ? But I told you, did I not,
 Ere night we travel for your land—some isle
 With the sea's silence on it ? Stand aside—
 I do but break these paltry models up
 To begin art afresh. Shall I meet Lutwyche,
 And save him from my statue's meeting him ?
 Some unsuspected isle in the far seas !
 Like a god going th' his world there stands
 One mountain for a moment in the dusk,
 Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its brow—
 And you are ever by me while I gaze
 —Are in my arms as now—as now—as now !
 Some unsuspected isle in the far seas !
 Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas !

Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from Orcana to the Turret. Two or three of the Austrian Police loitering with BLUPHOCKS, an English vagabond, just in view of the Turret.

*Bluphocks.** So, that is your Pippa, the little girl who passed us singing? Well, your Bishop's Intendant's money shall be honestly earned:—now, don't make me that sour face because I bring the Bishop's name into the business—we know he can have nothing to do with such horrors—we know that he is a saint and all that a Bishop should be, who is a great man besides. *Ol! were but every worm a maggot, Every fly a grig, Every bough a Christmas faggot, Every tune a jig!* In fact, I have abjured all religions; but the last I inclined to was the Armenian—for I have travelled, do you see, and at Koenigsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled because there's a sort of bleak hungry sun there,) you might remark over a venerable house-porch, a certain Chaldee inscription; and brief as it is, a mere glance at it used absolutely to change the mood of every bearded passenger. In they turned, one and all; the young and lightsome, with no irreverent pause, the aged and decrepit with a sensible alacrity,—'twas the Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac—(these are vowels, you dogs,—follow my stick's end in the mud—*Celarent, Darii, Ferio!*) and one morning presented myself spelling-book in hand, a, b, c,—I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy? Some cherished legend of the past you'll say—“*How Moses hocus-pocust Egypt's land with fly and locust,*”—or, “*How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish,*”—or, “*How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam;*”—in no wise! “*Shackabracch—Boach—somebody or other—Isaach; Re-cei-ver, Pur-cha-ser and Ex-chan-ger of—Stolen goods!*” So talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge—mean to live so—and die—*As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry—With food for both worlds, under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, and never an obolus . . .* (Though thanks to you, or this Intendant thro' you, or this Bishop thro' his Intendant—I possess a burning pocket-full of zwanzigers) . . . *To pay the Stygian ferry!*

1st Pol. There is the girl, then; go and deserve them the moment you have pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his

* “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

mother. (*To the rest*) I have been noticing a house yonder, this long while—not a shutter unclosed since morning!

2nd Pol. Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the silk-mills here : he dozes by the hour—wakes up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be Prince Metternich, and then dozes again, after having bidden young Sebald, the foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts ; never molest such a household, they mean well.

Blup. Only, cannot you tell me something of this little Pippa, I must have to do with?—one could make something of that name. Pippa—that is short for Felippa—rhyming to —*Panurge consults Hertrippa—Believ'st thou, King Agrippa?* Something might be done with that name.

2nd Pol. Put into rhyme that your head and a ripe muskmelon would not be dear at half a *zwanziger!* Leave this fooling, and look out—the afternoon's over, or nearly so.

3rd Pol. Where in this passport of Signor Luigi does our principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? what's there beside a simple signature? (That English fool's busy watching.)

2nd Pol. Flourish all round—"put all possible obstacles in his way;" oblong dot at the end—"Detain him till further advice, reach you;" scratch at bottom—"Send him back on pretence of some informality in the above;" ink-spirit on right-hand side, (which is the case here)—"Arrest him at once," why and wherefore, I don't concern myself, but my instructions amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna, well and good—the passport deposited with us for our *visa* is really for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well; but let him stay over to-night—there has been the pretence we suspect—the accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari are correct—we arrest him at once—to-morrow comes Venice—and presently, Spielberg. Bluphocks makes the signal sure enough! That is he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

III.—*Evening. Inside the Turret. LUIGI and his Mother entering.*

Mother. If there blew wind, you'd hear a long sigh, easing The utmost heaviness of music's heart.

Luigi. Here in the archway?

Mother. Oh no, no—in farther. Where the echo is made—on the ridge.

Luigi. Here surely, then. How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped up!

Hark—"Lucius Junius!" The very ghost of a voice,
 Whose body is caught and kept by . . . what are those?
 Merc withered wall-flowers, waving overhead?
 They seem an elvish group with thin bleached hair
 Who lean out of their topinost fortress—looking
 And listening, mountain men, to what we say,
 Hands under chin of each grave earthy face:
 Up and show faces all of you!—"All of you!"
 That's the king's dwarf with the scarlet comb; now hark—
 Come down and meet your fate! Hark—"Meet your fate!"

Mother. Let him not meet it, my Luigi—do not
 Go to his city; putting crime aside
 Half of these ills of Italy are feigned—
 Your Pellicos and writers for effect,
 Write for effect.

Luigi. Hush! say A. writes, and B.

Mother. These A.'s and B.'s write for effect, I say.
 Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good
 Is silent—you hear each petty injury—
 None of his daily virtues; he is old,
 Quiet, and kind, and densely stupid—why
 Do A. and B. not kill him themselves?

Luigi. They teach
 Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail,
 Others to succeed; now, if A. tried and failed
 I could not teach that: mine's the lesser task.
 Mother, they visit night by night . . .

Mother. —You, Luigi?
 Ah, will you let me tell you what you are?

Luigi. Why not? Oh, the one thing you fear to hint,
 You may assure yourself I say and say
 Ever to myself; at times—nay, even as now
 We sit, I think my mind is touched—suspect
 All is not sound: but is not knowing that,
 What constitutes one sane or otherwise?
 I know I am thus—so all is right again!
 I laugh at myself as through the town I walk,
 And see men merry as if no Italy
 Were suffering; then I ponder—"I am rich,
 "Young, healthy; why should this fact trouble me,
 "More than it troubles these?" But it does trouble me!
 No—trouble's a bad word—for as I walk
 There's springing and melody and giddiness,
 And old quaint turns and passages of my youth
 Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves—
 Return to me—whatever may amuse me,
 And earth seems in a truce with me, and heaven
 Accords with me, all things suspend their strife,

The very cicadas laugh “ There goes he, and there !
 “ Feast him, the time is short—he is on his way
 “ For the world’s sake—feast him this once, our friend ! ”
 And in return for all this, I can trip
 Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps : I go
 This evening, mother !

Mother. But mistrust yourself—
 Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on him.
Luigi. Oh, there I feel—I am sure that I am right !
Mother. Mistrust your judgment, then, of the mere means
 Of this wild enterprise : say you are right,—
 How should one in your state e’er bring to pass
 What would require a cool head, a cold heart,
 And a calm hand ? You never will escape.

Luigi. Escape—to even wish that, would spoil all !
 The dying is best part of it. Too much
 Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,
 To leave myself excuse for longer life—
 Was not life pressed down, running o’er with joy,
 That I might finish with it ere my fellows
 Who, sparerlier feasted, make a longer stay ?
 I was put at the board-head, helped to all
 At first ; I rise up happy and content.
 God must be glad one loves his world so much—
 I can give news of earth to all the dead
 Who ask me ;—last year’s sunsets, and great stars
 That had a right to come first and see ebb
 The crimson wave that drifts the sun away—
 Those crescent moons with notched and burning rims
 That strengthened into sharp fire, and there stood,
 Impatient of the azure—and that day
 In March, a double rainbow stopped the storm—
 May’s warm, slow, yellow moonlit summer nights—
 Gone are they, but I have them in my soul !

. *Mother.* (He will not go !)
Luigi. You smile at me ! ‘Tis true.—
 Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,
 Environ my devotedness as quaintly
 As round about some antique altar wreath
 The rose festoons, goats’ horns, and oxen’s skulls.

Mother. See now : you reach the city—you must cross
 His threshold—how ?

Luigi. Oh, that’s if we conspired !
 Then would come pains in plenty, as you guess—
 But guess not how the qualities required
 For such an office—qualities I have—
 Would little stead me otherwise employed,
 Yet prove of rarest merit here—here only.

*And judge them every one
 From its threshold of smooth stone.
 They haled him many a valley-thief,
 Caught in the sheep-pens—robber-chief,
 Swarthy and shameless—beggar-cheat—
 Spy-prowler—or rough pirate found
 On the sea-sand left aground;
 And sometimes clung about his feet,
 With bleeding lip and burning cheek,
 A woman, bitterest wrong to speak
 Of one with sullen thickset brows :
 And sometimes from the prison-house
 The angry priests a pale wretch brought,
 Who through some chink had pushed and pressed,
 On knees and elbows, belly and breast,
 Worm-like into the temple,—caught
 At last there by the very God,
 Who ever in the darkness strode
 Backward and forward, keeping watch
 O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch !
 And these, all and every one,
 The king judged, sitting in the sun.*

Luigi. That king should still judge sitting in the sun !

*[From without.] His councillors, on left and right,
 Looked anxious up,—but no surprise
 Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes,
 Where the very blue had turned to white.
 'Tis said, a Python scared one day
 The breathless city, till he came,
 With forked tongue and eyes on flame,
 Where the old king sate to judge alway ;
 But when he saw the sweepy hair,
 Girt with a crown of berries rare
 Which the God will hardly give to wear
 To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare
 In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,
 At his wondrous forest rites,—
 Beholding this, he did not dare
 Approach that threshold in the sun,
 Assault the old king smiling there.
 Such grace had kings when the world begun !*

(*PIPPA passes.*)

Luigi. And such grace have they, now that the world ends !

The Python in the city, on the throne,
 And brave men, God would crown for slaying him,

Lurk in byc-corners lest they fall his prey.
 Are crowns yet to be won, in this late trial,
 Which weakness makes me hesitate to reach ?
 'Tis God's voice calls, how could I stay ? Farewell !

Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from the Turret to the Bishop's brother's House, close to the Duomo S. Maria. Poor Girls sitting on the steps.

1st Girl. There goes a swallow to Venice—the stout sea-farer !

Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish for wings.
 Let us all wish : you wish first !

2nd Girl. I ? This sunset
 To finish.

3rd Girl. That old . . . somebody I know,
 Greyer and older than my grandfather,
 To give me the same treat he gave last week—
 Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,
 Lampreys, and red Breganze wine, and mumbling
 The while some folly about how well I fare,
 To be let eat my supper quietly—
 Since had he not himself been late this morning
 Detained at—never mind where,—had he not . . .
 " Eh ? baggage had I not ! "

2nd Girl. How she can lie !

3rd Girl. Look there—by the nails—

2nd Girl. What makes your fingers red ?

3rd Girl. Dipping them into wine to write bad words with,
 On the bright table—how he laughed !

1st Girl. My turn : .
 Spring's come and summer's coming : I would wear
 A long loose gown—down to the feet and hands—
 With plaits here, close about the throat, all day ;
 And all night lie, the cool long nights, in bed—
 And have new milk to drink—apples to eat,
 Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats . . ah, I should say,
 This is away in the fields—miles !

3rd Girl. Say at once
 You'd be at home—she'd always be at home !
 Now comes the story of the farm among
 The cherry orchards, and how April snowed
 With blossoms on her as she ran : why, fool,
 They've rubbed out the chalk-mark of how tall you were,

Twisted your starling's neck, broken his cage,
Made a dunghill of your garden — —

1st Girl. They, destroy
My garden since I left them ? well—perhaps
I would have done so—so I hope they have !
A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall—
They called it mine, I have forgotten why,
It must have been there long ere I was born ;
Crie—crie—I think I hear the wasps o'erhead
Pricking the papers strung to flutter there
And keep off birds in fruit-time—coarse long papers,
And the wasps eat them, prick them through and through.

3rd Girl. How her mouth twitches ! Where was I ?—before
She broke in with her wishes and long gowns
And wasps—would I be such a fool !—Oh, here !
This is my way—I answer every one
Who asks me why I make so much of him—
(If you say, you love him—straight “ he'll not be gulled ”)
“ He that seduced me when I was a girl
Thus high—had eyes like yours, or hair like yours,
Brown, red, white,”—as the case may be—that pleases !
(See how that beetle burnishes in the path—
There sparkles he along the dust ! and, there—
Your journey to that maize-tuft's spoilt at least !)

1st Girl. When I was young, they said if you killed one
Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend
Up there, would shine no more that day nor next.

2nd Girl. When you were young ? Nor are you young,
that's true !

How your plump arums, that were, have dropped away !
Why, I can span them ! Cecco beats you still ?
No matter, so you keep your curious hair.
I wish they'd find a way to dye our hair
Your colour—any lighter tint, indeed,
Than black—the men say they are sick of black,
Black eyes, black hair !

4th Girl.t Sick of yours, like enough !
Do you preend you ever tasted lampreys
And ortolans ? Giovita, of the palace,
Engaged (but there's no trusting him) to slice me
Polenta with a knife that has cut up
An ortolan.

2d Girl. Why, there ! is not that Pippa
We are to talk to, under the window,—quick,—
Where the lights are ?

1st Girl. No—or she would sing ;
—For the Intendant said . . .

3rd Girl. Oh, you sing first—

Then, if she listens and comes close . . I'll tell you,
 Sing that song the young English noble made,
 Who took you for the purest of the pure,
 And meant to leave the world for you—what fun !

2nd Girl. [Sings.]

You'll love me yet! —and I can tarry
 Your love's protracted growing :
 June reared that bunch of flowers you carry
 From seeds of April's sowing.

I plant a heartfull now—some seed
 At least is sure to strike
 And yield—what you'll not pluck indeed,
 Not love, but, may be, like !

You'll look at least on love's remains,
 A grave 's one violet :
 Your look?—that pays a thousand pains.
 What's death?—You'll love me yet!

3rd Girl. [To PIPPA, who approaches.] Oh, you may come closer—we shall not eat you ! Why, you seem the very person that the great rich handsome Englishman has fallen so violently in love with ! I'll tell you all about it.

IV.—Night. The Palace by the Duomo. MONSIGNOR, dismissing his Attendants.

Mon. Thanks, friends, many thanks. I chiefly desire life now, that I may recompense every one of you. Most I know something of already. What, a repast prepared ? *Benedicto benedicatur* . . ugh . . ugh ! Where was I ? Oh, as you were remarking, Ugo, the weather is mild, very unlike winter-weather,—but I am a Sicilian, you know, and shiver in your Julys here : To be sure, when 'twas full summer at Messina, as we priests used to cross in procession the great square on Assumption Day, you might see our thickest yellow tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a falling star, or sink down on themselves in a gore of wax. But go, my frfends, but go ! [To the Intendant] Not you, Ugo ! [The others leave the apartment.] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo !

Inten. Ugguccio—

Mon. . . 'guccio Stefani, man ! of Ascoli, Fermo, and Fos-sombruno ;—what I do need instructing about are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh ! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts : take some of these dainties before we attempt it. however : are

you bashful to that degree? For me, a crust and water suffice.

Inten. Do you choose this especial night to question me?

Mon. This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother's affairs since the death of our elder brother—fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the 3rd of December, I find him . . .

Inten. If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back—they will hardly bear looking into so far back.

Mon. Ay, ay, ugh, ugh!—nothing but disappointments here below! I remark a considerable payment made to yourself on this 3rd of December. Talk of disappointments! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor, I did my utmost to advance, that the Church might be a gainer by us both: he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of art; here's his letter,—“He never had a clearly conceived Ideal within his brain till to-day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's Ideals—and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure—his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit: there is but one method of escape—confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics,”—strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio: how think you, Ugo?

Inten. Is Correggio a painter?

Mon. Foolish Jules! and yet, after all, why foolish? He may—probably will, fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way by a poet, now, or a musician, (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel,) transferring it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them; eh, Ugo? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo!

Inten. Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours: first, you select the group of which I formed one,—next you thin it gradually,—always retaining me with your smile,—and so do you proceed till you have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls: and now then? Let this farce, this chatter end now—what is it you want with me?

Mon. Ugo . . .

Inten. From the instant you arrived, I felt your smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers—why, your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*,—and your nod at the end meant,—what?

Mon. Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here: if once you set me coughing Ugo!—

Inten. I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess: now ask me what for! what service I did him—ask me!

Mon. I had better not—I should rip up old disgraces—let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forli, (which, I forgot to observe, is your true name,) was the interdict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena?

Inten. No, nor needs be—for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him . . .

Mon. Ah, he employed you in that business, did he? Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere*, for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp! Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under heaven: my own father . . . rest his soul! (I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest:) my dear two dead brothers were,—what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled them in vice, if not in wealth, but from my boyhood I came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only,—for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however; so far as my brother's ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stop the consequences of his crime; and not one *soldo* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villainous seize. Because, to pleasure myself, apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sackcloth, and my couch straw,—am I therefore to let you, the off-scouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant, by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *poderes* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No . . . if my cough would but allow me to speak!

Inten. What am I to expect? you are going to punish me?

Mon. Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in! How should I dare to say . . .

Inten. “Forgive us our trespasses——”

Mon. My friend, it is because I avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud, perhaps: shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardon-

ing?—I?—who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuous efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less keep others out. No—I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

Inten. And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

Mon. 1, 2—N^o. 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, N^o. 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of that infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever, and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old story? The heir between the succeeding heir, and that heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes, and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come, now!

Inten. So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face, or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly—the child is always ready to produce—as you say—howsoever, wheresoever, and whensoever.

Mon. Liar!

Inten. Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow; for what a life did I lead! Carlo of Ceseno reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity (which happens commonly thrice a year). If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bish op—you!

Mon. I see thro' the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once; all shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

Inten. And how my absurd riches encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify Heaven, and die!

Sir, you are no brutal, dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death—let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you—the girl—here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak—know nothing of her or me! I see her every day—saw her this

morning : of course there is to be no killing ; but at Rome the courtesans perish off every three years, and I can entice her thither—have, indeed, begun operations already. There's a certain lusty, blue-eyed, florid-complexioned, English knave I and the police employ occasionally.—You assent, I perceive—no, that's not it—assent I do not say—but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps ? 'Tis but a little black-eyed, pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague to you with her ! 'Tis as well settled once and for ever : some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my handsome scoundrel, off for somebody ; and once Pippa entangled !—you conceive ? Through her singing ? Is it a bargain ?

[*From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—*

Overhead the tree-tops meet—

Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet—

There was nought above me, and nought below,

My childhood had not learned to know !

For, what are the voices of birds

—Ay, and of beasts,—but words—our words,

Only so much more sweet !

The knowledge of that with my life begun !

But I had so near made out the sun,

And counted your stars, the Seven and One,

Like the fingers of my hand :

Nay, I could all but understand

Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges ;

And just when out of her soft fifty changes

No unfamiliar face might overlook me—

Suddenly God took me !

(PIPPA passes.)

Mon. [Springing up] My people—one and all—all—within there ! Gag this villain—tie him hand and foot ! He dares—I know not half he dares—but remove him—quick ! *Miscere mei, Domine !* quick, I say !

PIPPA's Chamber again. She enters it.

The bee with his comb,

The mouse at her dray,

The grub in its tomb,

Wile winter away :

But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-worm, I pray,

How fare they ?

Ha, ha ! best thanks for your counsel, my Zanze—

“ Feast upon lampreys, quaff the Breganze ”—

The summer of life 's so easy to spend,
 And care for to-morrow so soon put away !
 But winter hastens at summer's end,
 And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,
 How fare they ?
 No bidding me then to . . . what did she say ?
 " Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small feet shoes
 " More like . . . (what said she ?)—and less like canoes—"—
 How pert that girl was !—would I be those pert,
 Impudent, staring women ! it had done me,
 However, surely no such mighty hurt
 To learn his name who passed th at jest upon me :
 No foreigner, that I can recollect,
 Came, as she says, a month since, to inspect
 Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and thick rings
 Of English-coloured hair, at all events.
 Well—if old Luca keeps his good intents ,
 We shall do better : see what next year brings !
 I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear
 More destitute than you, perhaps, next year !
 Bluph. . . something ! I had caught the uncouth name
 But for Monsignor's people's sudden clatter
 Above us—bound to spoil such idle chatter
 As ours ; it were, indeed, a serious matter
 If silly talk like ours should put to shame
 The pious man, the man devoid of blame,
 The . . . ah, but—ah, but, all the same,
 No mere mortal has a right
 To carry that exalted air ;
 Best people are not angels quite—
 While—not the worst of people's doings scare
 The devils ; so there 's that proud look to spare !
 Which is mere counsel to myself, mind ! for
 I have just been the holy Monsignor !
 And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,
 And you too, Luigi !—how that Luigi started
 Out of the Turret—doubtlessly departed
 On some good errand or another,
 For he passed just now in a traveller's trim,
 And the sullen company that prowled
 About his path, I noticed, scowled
 As if they had lost a prey in him.
 And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,
 And I was Ottima beside,
 And now what am I ?—tired of fooling !
 Day for folly, night for schooling !
 New year's day is over and spent,
 Ill or well, I must be content !

Even my lily 's asleep, I vow :
 Wake up—here 's a friend I 've plukt you !
 See—call this flower a heart's-ease now !
 And something rare, let me instruct you,
 Is this—with petals triply swollen,
 Three times spotted, thrice the pollen,
 While the leaves and parts that witness
 The old proportions and their fitness
 Here remain, unchanged, unmoved now—.
 So call this pampered thing improved now !
 Suppose there 's a king of the flowers
 And a girl-show held in his bowers—
 "Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,"
 Says he, "Zanze from the Brenta,
 I have made her gorge polenta
 Till both cheeks are near as bouncing
 As her . . . name there's no pronouncing !
 See this heightened colour too—
 For she swilled Breganze wine
 Till her nose turned deep carmine—
 'Twas but white when wild she grew !
 And only by this Zanze's eyes
 Of which we could not change the size,
 The magnitude of what 's achieved
 Otherwise, may be perceived !"

Oh what a drear, dark close to my poor day !
 How could that red sun drop in that black cloud ?
 Ah, Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,
 Dispensed with, never more to be allowed,
 Day's turn is over—now arrives the night's—.
 Oh, Lark, be day's apostle
 To mavis, merle and throstle,
 Bid them their betters jostle
 From day and its delights !
 But at night, brother Howlet, far over the woods,
 Toll the world to thy chantry—
 Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods
 Full complines with gallantry—
 Then, owls and bats, cowls and twats,
 Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,
 Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry !

[After she has begun to undress herself.]

Now, one thing I should like really to know :
 How near I ever might approach all these
 I only fancied being, this long day—
 —Approach, I mean, so as to touch them—so

As to . . . in some way . . . move them—if you please,
 Do good or evil to them some slight way.
 For instance, if I wind
 Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind

[*Sitting on the bedside.*

And broider Ottima's cloak's hem—

Ah, me and my important part with them,
 This morning' hymn half-promised when I rose !
 True in some sense or other, I suppose,
 Though I passed by them all, and felt no sign.

[*As she lies down.*

God bless me ! I can pray no more to-night.
 No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right.
All service is the same with God—
With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
Are we : there is no last nor first.—

[*She sleeps.*

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

A Tragedy.

So far as I know, this Tragedy is the first artistical consequence of what Voltaire termed "a terrible event without consequences"; and although it professes to be historical, I have taken more pains to arrive at the history than most readers would thank me for particularising; since acquainted, as I will hope them to be, with the chief circumstances of Victor's remarkable European career—not quite ignorant of the sad and surprising facts I am about to reproduce (tolerable accounts of which are to be found, for instance, in Abbé Roman's *Récit*, or even the fifth of Lord Orrery's Letters from Italy)—I cannot expect them to be versed, nor desirous of becoming so, in all the details of the memoirs, correspondence, and relations of the time. From these only may be obtained a knowledge of the fiery and audacious temper, unscrupulous selfishness, profound dissimulation, and singular fertility in resources, of Victor—the extreme and painful sensibility, prolonged immaturity of powers, earnest good purpose and vacillating will, of Charles—the noble and right woman's-manliness of his wife—and the ill-considered rascality and subsequent better-advised rectitude of D'Ormea. When I say, therefore, that I cannot but believe my statement (combining as it does what appears correct in Voltaire and plausible in Condorcet) more true to person and thing than any it has hitherto been my fortune to meet with, no doubt my word will be taken, and my evidence spared as readily

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

PERSONS.

VICTOR AMADEUS, First King of Sardinia.

CHARLES EMMANUEL, his Son, Prince of Piedmont.

POLYXENA, Wife of Charles.

D'ORMEA, Minister.

SCENE—The Council Chamber of Rivoli Palace, near Turin,
communicating with a Hall at the back, an Apartment to the
left and another to the right of the stage.

TIME, 1730-1.

FIRST YEAR 1730.—KING VICTOR.

PART I.

CHARLES, POLYXENA.

Cha. You think so? Well, I do not.

Pol. My beloved,

All must clear up—we shall be happy yet:

This cannot last for ever . . . oh, may change

To-day, or any day!

Cha. —May change? Ah yes—
May change!

Pol. Endure it, then.

Cha. No doubt, a life
Like this drags on, now better and now worse;
My father may . . . may take to loving me;
And he may take, too, D'Ormea closer yet
To counsel him;—may even cast off her
—That bad Sebastian; but he also may
. . . Or, no, Polyxena, my only friend,
He may not force you from me?

Pol. Now, force me
From you!—me, close by you as if there gloomed
No D'Ormeas, no Sebastians on our path—
At Rivoli or Turin, still at hand,
Arch-counsellor, prime confidant . . . force me!

Cha. Because I felt as sure, as I feel sure
We clasp hands now, of being happy once.
Young was I, quite neglected, nor concerned
By the world's business that engrossed so much
My father and my brother: if I peered
From out my privacy amid the crash
And blaze of nations, domineered those two;
'Twas war, peace—France our foe, now—England, friend—
In love with Spain—at feud with Austria!—Well—
I wondered—laughed a moment's laugh for pride
In the chivalrous couple—then let drop
My curtain—"I am out of it," I said—
When . . .

Pol. You have told me, Charles.

Cha. Polyxena—
When suddenly,—a warm March day, just that!
Just so much sunshine as the cottager's child
Basks in delighted, while the cottager
Takes off his bonnet, as he ceases work,
To catch the more of it—and it must fall
Heavily on my brother . . . had you seen
Philip—the lion-featured!—not like me!

Pol. I know—

Cha. And Philip's mouth yet fast to mine,
His dead cheek on my cheek, his arm still round
My neck,—they bade me rise, "for I was heir
To the Duke," they said, "the right hand of the Duke!"
Till then he was my father, not the Duke!"
So . . . let me finish . . . the whole intricate
World's business their dead boy was born to, I
Must conquer,—ay, the brilliant thing he was,
I, of a sudden, must be: my faults, my follies,
—All bitter truths were told me, all at once
To end the sooner. What I simply styled
Their overlooking me, had been contempt:
How should the Duke employ himself, forsooth,
With such an one while lordly Philip rode
By him their Turin through? But he was punished,
And must put up with—me! 'Twas sad enough
To learn my future portion and submit—
And then the wear and worry, blame on blame!
—For, spring-sounds in my ears, spring-smells about,
How could I but grow dizzy in their pent

Dim palace-rooms at first ? My mother's look
As they discussed my insignificance—
(She and my father, and I sitting by,)—
I bore :—I knew how brave a son they missed :
Philip had gaily passed state-papers o'er,
While Charles was spelling at them painfully !
But Victor was my father spite of that.
“ Duke Victor's entire life has been,” I said,
“ Innumerable efforts to one end ;
“ And, on the point now of that end's success,
“ Our Ducal turning to a Kingly crown,
“ Where's time to be reminded 'tis his child
“ He spurns ? ” And so I suffered . . . yet scarce suffered,
Since I had you at length !

Pol. —To serve in place
Of monarch, minister and mistress, Charles
Cha. But, once that crown obtained, then was 't not like
Our lot would alter ? —“ When he rests, takes breath,
“ Glances around, and sees who's left to love—
“ Now that my mother's dead, sees I am left—
“ Is it not like he'll love me at the last ? ”
Well : Savoy turns Sardinia—the Duke's King !
Could I—precisely then—could you expect
His harshness to redouble ? These few months
Have been . . . have been . . . Polyxena, do you
And God conduct me, or I lose myself !
What would he have ? What is 't they want with me ?
Him with this mistress and this minister,
—You see me and you hear him ; judge us both !
Pronounce what I should do, Polyxena !

Pol. Endure, endure, beloved ! Say you not
That he's your Father ? All's so incident
To novel sway ! Beside, our life must change :
Or you'll acquire his kingcraft, or he'll find
Harshness a sorry way of teaching it.
I bear this—not that there's so much to bear—

Cha. You bear it ? don't I know that you, tho' bound
To silence for my sake, are perishing
Piecemeal beside me ? and how otherwise ?
—When every creephole from the hideous Court
Is stopt ; the Minister to dog me, here—
The Mistress posted to entrap you, there !
And thus shall we grow old in such a life—
Not careless,—never estranged,—but old : to alter
Our life, there is so much to alter !

Pol. Come—
Is it agreed that we forego complaints
Even at Turin, yet complain we here

At Rivoli ? Twere wiser you announced
 Our presence to the King. What's now a-foot,
 I wonder ?—Not that any more's to dread
 Than every day's embarrassment—but guess
 For me, why train so fast succeeded train
 On the high-road, each gayer still than each.
 I noticed your Archbishop's *pursuivant*,
 The sable cloak and silver cross ; such pomip
 Bodes . . what now, Charles ? Can you conceive ?

Cha.

Not I.

Pol. A matter of some moment——*Cha.*

There's our life !

Which of the group of loiterors that stared
 From the lime-avenue, divines that I—
 About to figure presently, he thinks,
 In face of all assembled—am the one
 Who knows precisely least about it ?

Pol.

Tush !

D'Ormea's contrivance !

Cha. Ay—how otherwise
 Should the young Prince serve for the old King's foil ?
 —So that the simplest courtier may remark,
 'Twere idle raising parties for a Prince
 Content to linger D'Ormea's laughing-stock !
 Something, 'tis like, about that weary business—

"Pointing to papers he has laid down, and which POLYXENA cramincs.]

—Not that I comprehend three words, of course,
 After all last night's study.

Pol.

The faint heart !

Why, as we rode and you rehearsed just now
 Its substance . . (that's the folded speech I mean,
 Concerning the Reduction of the Fiefs . .)
 —What would you have ?—I fancied, while you spoke,
 Some tones were just your father's.

Cha.

Flattery !

Pol. I fancied so :—and here lurks, sure enough,
 My note upon the Spanish Claims ! You've mastered
 The fief-speech thoroughly—this other, mind,
 Is an opinion you deliver—stay,
 Best read it slowly over once to me ;
 Read—there's bare time ; you read it firmly—loud
 —Rather loud—looking in his face,—don't sink
 Your eye once—ay, thus ! “If Spain claims . . .” begin
 —Just as you look at me !

Cha.

At you ! Oh, truly,

You have I seen, say, marshalling your troops—
 Dismissing councils—or, through doors ajar,

Head sunk on hand, devoured by slow chagrins
—Then radiant, for a crown had all at once
Seemed possible again ! I can behold
Him, whose least whisper ties my spirit fast,
In this sweet brow, nought could divert me from
Save objects like Sebastian's shameless lip,
Or, worse, the clipt grey hair and dead white face,
And dwindling eye as if it ached with guile,
Which D'Ormea wears . . .

[*As he kisses her, enter from the King's apartment*
D'ORMEA.]

. . . I said he would divert

My kisses from your brow !

D'O. [Aside.] Here ! So King Victor
Spoke truth for once ; and who 's ordained, but I,
To make that memorable ? Both in call,
As he declared ! Were 't better gnash the teeth,
Or laugh outright now ?

Cha. [to Pol.] What 's his visit for ?

D'O. [Aside.] I question if they 'll even speak to me.

Pol. [to Cha.] Face D'Ormea, he 'll suppose you fear him,
else.

[Aloud.] The Marquis bears the King's command, no
doubt.

D'O [Aside] Precisely !—If I threatened him, perhaps ?
Well, this at least is punishment enough !
Men used to promise punishment would come.

Cha. Deliver the King's message, Marquis !

D'O. [Aside.] Ah !—
So anxious for his fate ? [Aloud.] A word, my Prince,
Before you see your father—just one word
Of counsel !

Cha. Oh, your counsel certainly—
Polyxena, the Marquis counsels us !
Well, sir ? Be brief, however !

D'O. What ? you know
As much as I ?—preceded me, most like,
In knowledge ? So ! ('Tis in his eye, beside—
His voice—he knows it and his heart 's on flame
Already !) You surmise why you, myself,
Del Borgo, Spava, fifty nobles more,
Are summoned thus ?

Cha. Is the Prince used to know,
At any time, the pleasure of the King,
Before his minister ?—Polyxena,
Stay here till I conclude my task—I feel
Your presence—(smile not)—thro' the walls, and take
Fresh heart. The King 's within that chamber ?

D'O. [Passing the table whereon a paper lies, exclaims, as he glances as it,] "Spain!"

Pol. [Aside to CHA.] Tarry awhile: what ails the minister?

D'O. Madam, I do not often trouble you.

The Prince loathes, and you loathe me—let that pass;
But since it touches him and you, not me,
Bid the Prince listen!

Pol. [to CHA.] Surely you will listen!

—Deceit?—Those fingers crumpling up his vest?

Cha. Deceitful to the very fingers' ends!

D'O. [who has approached them, overlooks the other paper
CHARLES continues to hold.]

My project for the Fiefs! As I supposed!

Sir, I must give you light upon those measures

—For this is mine, and that I spied of Spain

Mine too!

Cha. Release me! Do you gloze on me
Who bear in the world's face (that is, the world
You've made for me at Turin) your contempt?
—Your measures?—When was any hateful task
Not D'Ormea's imposition? Leave my robe!
What post can I bestow, what grant concede?
Or do you take me for the King?

D'O. Not I!
Not yet for King,—not for, as yet, thank God,
One, who in . . . shall I say a year—a month?
Ay!—shall be wretcheder than e'er was slave
In his Sardinia,—Europe's spectacle,
And the world's bye-word! What! the Prince aggrieved
That I've excluded him our counsels? Here

[Touching the paper in CHARLES's hand.
Accept a method of extorting gold
From Savoy's nobles, who must wring its worth
In silver first from tillers of the soil,
Whose hinds again have to contribute brass
To make up the amount—there's counsel, sir!
My counsel, one year old; and the fruit, this—
Savoy's become a mass of misery
And wrath, which one man has to meet—the King:
You're not the King! Another counsel, sir!
Spain entertains a project (here it lies)
Which, guessed, makes Austria offer that same King
Thus much to baffle Spain; he promises
Then comes Spain, breathless lest she be forestalled,
Her offer follows; and he promises . . .

Cha. —Promises, sir, when he before agree
To Austria's offer?

D'O. That's a counsel, Prince !
 But past our foresight, Spain and Austria (choosing
 To make their quarrel up between themselves
 Without the intervention of a friend)
 Produce both treaties, and both promises . . .

Cha. How ?

D'O. Prince, a counsel !—And the fruit of that ?
 Both parties covenant afresh, to fall
 Together on their friend, blot out his name,
 Abolish him from Europe. So take note,
 Here's Austria and here's Spain to fight against,
 And what sustains the King but Savoy here,
 A miserable people mad with wrongs ?
 You're not the King !

Cha. Polyxena, you said
 All would clear up—all does clear up to me !

D'O. Clear up ? 'Tis no such thing to envy, then ?
 You see the King's state in its length and breadth ?
 You blame me, now, for keeping you aloof
 From counsels and the fruit of counsels ?—Wait
 Till I've explained this morning's business !

Cha. [Aside.] No—
 Stoop to my father, yes,—to D'Ormea, no ;
 —The King's son, not to the King's counsellor !
 I will do something,—but at least retain
 The credit of my deed ! [Aloud.] Then, D'Ormea, this
 You now expressly come to tell me ?

D'O. This
 To tell ! You apprehend me ?

Cha. Perfectly.
 And further, D'Ormea, you have shown yourself,
 For the first time these many weeks and months,
 Disposed to do my bidding ?

D'O. From the heart !
Cha. Acquaint my father, first, I wait his pleasure :
 Next . . . or, I'll tell you at a fitter time.

Acquaint the King !

D'O. [Aside.] If I 'scape Victor yet !
 First to prevent this stroke at me—if not,—
 Then, to avenge it ! [To CHA.] Gracious sir, I go. [Goes.]

Cha. God, I forbore ! Which more offends—that man
 Or that man's master ? Is it come to this ?
 Have they supposed (the sharpest insult yet)
 I needed e'en his intervention ? No !
 No—dull am I, conceded,—but so dull,
 Scarcely ! Their step decides me.

Pol. How decides ?

Cha. You would be free from D'Ormea's eye and hers ?

—Could fly the court with me and live content?
 So—this it is for which the knights assemble!
 The whispers and the closeting of late,
 The savageness and insolence of old,
 —For this!

Pol. What mean you?

Cha. How? you fail to catch
 Their clever plot? I missed it—but could you?
 These last two months of care to inculcate
 How dull I am,—with D'Ormea's present visit
 To prove that, being dull, I might be worse
 Were I a king—as wretched as now dull—
 You recognise in it no winding up
 Of a long plot?

Pol. Why should there be a plot?

Cha. The crown's secure now; I should shame the crown--
 An old complaint; the point is, how to gain
 My place for one more fit in Victor's eyes,
 His mistress', the Sebastian's child.

Pol. In truth?

Cha. They dare not quite dethrone Sardinia's Prince:
 But they may descant on my dulness till
 They sting me into even praying them
 For leave to hide my head, resign my state,
 And end the coil. Not see now? In a word,
 They'd have me tender them myself my rights
 As one incapable:—some cause for that,
 Since I delayed thus long to see their drift!
 I shall apprise the King he may resume
 My rights this instant.

Pol. Pause—I dare not think
 So ill of Victor.

Cha. Think no ill of him!

Pol. —Nor think him, then, so shallow as to suffer.
 —His purpose be divined thus easily.
 And yet—you are the last of a great line
 There's a great heritage at stake; new days
 Seemed to await this newest of the realms
 Of Europe:—Charles, you must withstand this.

Cha. Ah—
 You dare not then renounce the splendid court
 For one whom all the world despises? Speak!

Pol. My gentle husband, speak I will, and truth.
 Were this as you believe, and I once sure
 Your duty lay in so renouncing rule,
 I could . . . could? Oh, what happiness it were—
 To live, my Charles, and die alone with you!

Cha. I grieve I asked you. To the Presence, then!

D'Ormea acquaints the King by this, no doubt,
He fears I am too simple for mere hints,
And that no less will serve than Victor's mouth
Teaching me in full council what I am.

—I have not breathed, I think, these many years!

Pol. Why—it may be!—if he desires to wed
That woman and legitimate her child—

Cha. You see as much? Oh, let his will have way!
You'll not repent confiding in me, love?
There's many a brighter spot in Piedmont, far,
Than Rivoli. I'll seek him—or, suppose
You hear first how I mean to speak my mind?
—Loudly and firmly both, this time, be sure!
I yet may see your Rhine-land—who can tell?
Once away, ever then away! I breathe!

Pol. And I too breathe!

Cha. Come, my Polyxena!

KING VICTOR: PART II.

Enter KING VICTOR, bearing the regalia on a cushion from his apartment. He calls loudly.

D'Ormea!—for patience fails me, treading thus
Among the trains that I have laid,—my knights,
Safe in the hall here—in that anteroom,
My son,—and D'Ormea, where? Of this, one touch—

[*Laying down the crown.*

This fireball to these mute, black, cold trains—then!
Outbreak enough!

[*Contemplating it.*] To lose all, after all!
This—glancing o'er my house for ages—shaped,
Brave meteor, like the Crown of Cyprus now—
Jerusalem, Spain, England—every change
The braver,—and when I have clutched a prize
My ancestry died wan with watching for
To lose it!—by a slip—a fault—a trick
Learnt to advantage once, and not unlearnt
When past the use,—“just this once more” (I thought)
“Use it with Spain and Austria happily,
And then away with trick!”—An oversight
I'd have repaired thrice over, any time
These fifty years, must happen now! There's peace
At length; and I, to make the most of peace,
Ventured my project on our people here,

As needing not their help—which Europe knows,
And means, cold-blooded, to dispose herself
(Apart from plausibilities of war)

To crush the new-made King—who ne'er till now
Feared her. As Duke, I lost each foot of earth
And laughed at her: my name was left, my sword
Left, all was left! But she can take, she knows,
This crown, herself conceded . . .

That's to try,

Kind Europe! My career's not closed as yet!
This boy was ever subject to my will—
Timid and tame—the fitter! D'Ormea too—
What if the sovereign's also rid of thee
His prime of parasites?—Yet I delay!

D'Ormea! [As D'ORMEA enters, the King seats himself.]
My son, the Prince—attends he?

D'O. Sire,
He does attend. The crown prepared!—it seems
That you persist in your resolve.

Vic. Who's come?
The chancellor and the chamberlain? My knights?
D'O. The whole Annunziata.—If, my liege,
Your fortunes had not tottered worse than now . . .

Vic. Del Borgo has drawn up the schedules? mine
My son's too? Excellent! Only, beware
Of the least blunder, or we look but fools.
First, you read the Annulment of the Oaths;
Del Borgo follows . . no, the Prince shall sign;
Then let Del Borgo read the Instrument—
On which, I enter.—

D'O. Sire, this may be truth;
You, sire, may do as you affect—may break
Your engine, me, to pieces: try at least
If not a spring remains worth saving! Take
My counsel as I've counselled many times!
What if the Spaniard and the Austrian threat?
There's England, Holland, Venice—which ally
Select you?

Vic. Aha! Come, my D'Ormea,—“truth”
Was on your lip a minute since. Allies?
I've broken faith with Venice, Holland, England.
—As who knows if not you?

D'O. But why with me
Break faith—with one ally, your best, break faith?
Vic. When first I stumbled on you, Marquis—('twas
At Mondovi—a little lawyer's clerk . . .)
D'O. . . . Therefore your soul's ally!—who brought you
through

Your quarrel with the Pope, at pains enough—
 Who 've simply echoed you in these affairs—
 On whom you cannot, therefore, visit these
 Affairs' ill fortune—whom you 'll trust to guide
 You safe (yes, on my soul) in these affairs!

Vic. I was about to notice, had you not
 Prevented me, that since that great town kept
 With its chicane my D'Ormea's satchel stuffed,
 And D'Ormea's self sufficiently recluse,
 He missed a sight,—my naval armament
 When I burnt Toulon. How the skiff exults
 Upon the galliot's wave!—rises its height
 O'er tops it even; but the great wave bursts—
 And hell-deep in the horrible profound
 Buries itself the galliot:—shall the skiff
 Think to escape the sea's black trough in turn?
 Apply this: you have been my minister
 —Next me—above me, possibly;—sad post,
 Huge care, abundant lack of peace of mind;
 Who would desiderate the eminence?
 You gave your soul to get it—you'd yet give
 Your soul to keep it, as I mean you shall,
 My D'Ormea! What if the wave ebbed with me?
 Whereas it casts you to another's crest—
 I toss you to my son; ride out your ride!

D'O. Ah, you so much despise me, then?

Vic. You, D'Ormea?
 Nowise: and I 'll inform you why. A king
 Must in his time have many ministers,
 And I 've been rash enough to part with mine
 When I thought proper. Of the tribe, not one
 . . . Or wait, did Pianezze? . . ah, just the same!)
 Not one of them, ere his remonstrance reached
 The length of yours, but has assured me (commonly,
 Standing much as you stand,—or nearer, say,
 The door to make his exit on his speech)
 —I should repent of what I did: now, D'Ormea,
 (Be candid—you approached it when I bade you
 Prepare the schedules! But you stopped in time)
 —You have not so assured me: how should I
 Despise you, then?

Enter CHARLES.

Vic. [changing his tone.] Are you instructed? Do
 My order, point by point! About it, sir!

D'O. You so despise me? [Aside.] One last stay remains—
 The boy's discretion there. [To CHARLES.]

For your sake, Prince,
I pleaded—wholly in your interest—
To save you from this fate!

Cha. [Aside.] Must I be told
The Prince was supplicated for—by him?

Vic. [to D'O.] Apprise Del Borgo, Spava, and the rest,
Our son attends them; then return.

D'O. One word,
Cha. [Aside.] A moment's pause and they would drive me
hence,

I do believe!

D'O. [Aside.] Let but the boy be firm!

Vic. You disobey?

Cha. [to D'O.] You do not disobey
Me, D'Ormea? Did you promise that or no?

D'O. Sir, I am yours—what would you? Yours am I!

Cha. When I have said what I shall say, 'tis like
Your face will ne'er again disgust me. Go!

Through you, as through a breast of glass, I see.

And for your conduct, from my youth till now,
Take my contempt! You might have spared me much,
Secured me somewhat, nor so harmed yourself—

That's over now. Go—ne'er to come again!

D'O. As son, the father—father as, the son!

My wits! My wits!

[Goes

Vic. [Seated.] And you, what meant you, pray,
By speaking thus to D'Ormea?

Cha. Let us not
Weary ourselves with D'Ormea! Those few words
Have half-unsettled what I came to say.
His presence vexes to my very soul.

Vic. One called to manage kingdoms, Charles, needs heart
To bear up under worse annoyances
Than D'Ormea seems—to me, at least.

Cha. [Aside.] Ah, good!
He keeps me to the point! Then be it so.
[Aloud.] Last night, Sire, brought me certain papers—these—
To be reported on,—your way of late.

Is it last night's result that you demand?

Vic. For God's sake, what has night brought forth?
Pronounce

The . . . what's your word?—result!

Cha. Sire, that had proved
Quite worthy of your sneers, no doubt:—a few
Lame thoughts, regard for you alone could wring,
Lame as they are, from brains, like mine, believe!
As 'tis, sire, I am spared both toil and sneer.
There are the papers.

Vic. Well, sir ? I suppose
You hardly burned them. Now for your result
Cha. I never should have done great things of course,
But . . . oh, my father, had you loved me more . . .
Vic. Loved you ? [Aside.] Has D'Ormea played me false, I
wonder ?

[Aloud.] Why, Charles, a king's love is diffused—yourself
May overlook, perchance, your part in it.

Our monarchy is absolutest now
In Europe, or my trouble 's thrown away :
I love, my mode, that subjects each and all
May have the power of loving, all and each,
Their mode : I doubt not, many have their sons
To trifle with, talk soft to, all day long—
I have that crown, this chair, and D'Ormea, Charles

Cha. 'Tis well I am a subject then, not you.

Vic. [Aside.] D'Ormea has told him everything.

[Aloud.] Aha :

I apprehend you : when all 's said, you take
Your private station to be prized beyond
My own, for instance ?

Cha. —Do and ever did
So take it : 'tis the method you pursue
That grieves . . .

Vic. These words ! Let me express, my friend,
Your thought. You penetrate what I supposed
A secret. D'Ormea plies his trade betimes !
I purpose to resign my crown to you.

Cha. To me ?

Vic. Now—in that chamber.

Cha. You resign
The crown to me ?

Vic. And time enough, Charles, sure ?
Confess with me, at four-and-sixty years
A crown 's a load. I covet quiet once
Before I die, and summoned you for that.

Cha. 'Tis I will speak : you ever hated me
I bore it,—have insulted me, borne too—
Now you insult yourself, and I remember
What I believed you, what you really are,
And cannot bear it. What ! My life has passed
Under your eye, tormented as you know,—
Your whole sanguicities, one after one,
At leisure brought to play on me—to prove me
A fool, I thought, and I submitted ; now
You'd prove . . . what would you prove me ?

Vic. This to me ?
I hardly know you !

Cha. Know me? Oh, indeed
 You do not! Wait till I complain next time
 Of my simplicity!—for here's a sage—
 Knows the world well—is not to be deceived—
 And his experience, and his Macchiavels,
 His D'Ormeas, teach him—what?—that I, this while,
 Have envied him his crown! He has not smiled,
 I warrant,—has not eaten, drunk, nor slept,
 For I was plotting with my Princess yonder!
 Who knows what we might do, or might not do?
 Go, now—be politic—astound the world!—
 That sentry in the antechamber . . . nay,
 The varlet who disposed this precious trap

{*Pointing to the crown.*

That was to take me—ask them if they think
 Their own sons envy them their posts!—Know me!

Vic. But you know me, it seems; so learn in brief
 My pleasure. This assembly is convened . . .

Cha. Tell me, that woman put it in your head—
 You were not sole contriver of the scheme,
 My father!

Vic. Now observe me, sir! I jest
 Seldom—on these points, never. Here, I say,
 The Knights assemble to see me concede,
 And you accept, Sardinia's crown.

Cha. Farewell!
 'Twere vain to hope to change this—I can end it.
 Not that I cease from being yours, when sunk
 Into obscurity. I'll die for you,
 But not annoy you with my presence—Sire,
 Farewell! Farewell!

Enter D'ORMEA.

D'O. [Aside.] Ha! sure he's changed again—
 Means not to fall into the cunning trap—
 Then, Victor, I shall yet escape you, Victor!

Vic. [suddenly placing the crown upon the head of CHARLES.]

D'Ormea, your King!

[*To CHARLES.*] My son, obey me! Charles,
 Your father, clearer-sighted than yourself,
 Decides it must be so. 'Faith, this looks real!
 My reasons after—reason upon reason
 After—but now, obey me! Trust in me!
 By this, you save Sardinia, you save me!
 Why, the boy swoons! [*To D'O.*] Come this side!

D'O. [as CHARLES turns from him to VICTOR.]

You persist?

Vic. Yes—I conceive the gesture's meaning. 'Faith,
He almost seems to hate you—how is that?
Be re-assured, my Charles! Is 't over now?
Then, Marquis, tell the new King what remains
To do! A moment's work. Del Borgo reads
The Act of Abdication out, you sign it,
Then I sign; after that, come back to me.

D.O. Sire, for the last time, pause!

Vic. Five minutes longer
I am your sovereign, Marquis. Hesitate—
And I'll so turn those minutes to account
That . . . Ay, you recollect me!

[*Aside.*] Could I bring
My foolish mind to undergo the reading
That Act of Abdication!

[As CHARLES motions D'ORMEA to precede him.
Thanks, dear Charles!
[CHARLES and D'ORMEA retire.

Vic. A novel feature in the boy,—indeed
Just what I feared he wanted most. Quite right,
This earnest tone—your truth, now, for effect!
It answers every purpose: with that look,
That voice,—I hear him: "I began no treaty,"
(He speaks to Spain,) "nor ever dreamed of this
"You show me: this I from my soul regret;
"But if my father signed it, bid not me
"Dishonour him—who gave me all, beside."
And, "truth," says Spain, "twere harsh to visit that
"Upon the Prince." Then come the nobles trooping:
"I grieve at these exactions—I had cut
"This hand off ere impose them; but shall I
"Undo my father's deed?"—And they confer:
"Doubtless he was no party, after all;
"Give the Prince time!"—

Ay, give us time—but time!
Only, he must not, when the dark day comes,
Refer our friends to me and frustrate all.
We'll have no child's play, no desponding fits,
No Charles at each cross turn entreating Victor
To take his crown again. Guard against that!

Enr. r D'ORMEA.

Long live King Charles!—

No—Charles's counsellor;
Well, is it over, Marquis? Did I jest?

D.O. "King Charles!" What then may you be?

Vic. Anything!
A country gentleman that's cured of bustle,

And beats a quick retreat toward Chambery
 To hunt and hawk, and leave you noisy folk
 To drive your trade without him. I 'm Count Remont—
 Count Tende—any little place's Count !

D'O. Then, Victor, Captain against Catinat,
 At Staffarde, where the French beat you ; and Duke
 At Turin, where you beat the French ; King, late,
 Of Savoy, Piedmont, Montferrat, Sardinia,
 —Now, “ any little place's Count ”—

Vic. Proceed !

D'O. Breaker of vows to God, who crowned you first ;
 Breaker of vows to Man, who kept you since ;
 Most profligate to me, who outraged God
 And Man to serve you, and am made pay crimes
 I was but privy to, by passing thus
 To your imbecile son—who, well you know,
 Must, (when the people here, and nations there,
 Clamour for you, the main delinquent, slipt
 From King to—Count of any little place)
 —Surrender me, all left within his reach,—
 I, sir, forgive you : for I see the end—
 See you on your return (you will return)
 To him you trust in for the moment . . .

Vic. How ?

Trust in him ? (merely a prime minister
 This D'Ormea !) How trust in him ?

D'O. In his fear—
 His love,—but pray discover for yourself
 What you are weakest, trusting in !

Vic. Aha !

My D'Ormea, not a shrewder scheme than this
 In your repertory ? You know old Victor—
 Vain, choleric, inconstant, rash—(I 've heard
 Talkers who little thought the King so close)
 Felicitous, now, were 't not, to provoke him
 To clean forget, one minute afterward,
 His solemn act—to call the nobles back
 And pray them give again the very power
 He has abjured !—for the dear sake of—what ?
 Vengeance on you ! No, D'Ormea : such am I,
 Count Tende or Count anything you please,
 —Only, the same that did the things you say,
 And, among other things you say not, used
 Your finest fibre, meanest muscle,—you
 I used, and now, since you will have it so,
 Leave to your fate—mere lumber in the midst,
 You and your works—Why, what on earth beside
 Are you made for, you sort of ministers ?

D'O. —Not left, though, to my fate ! Your witless son
Has more wit than to load himself with lumber
He foils you that way, and I follow you.

Vic. Stay with my son—protect the weaker side !

D'O. Ay, be tossed to the people like a rug,
And flung by them to Spain and Austria—so
Abolishing the record of your part
In all this perfidy !

Vic. Prevent, beside,
My own return !

D'O. That's half-prevented now !
'Twill go hard but you'll find a wondrous charm
In exile, to discredit me. The Alps—
Silk-mills to watch—vines asking vigilance—
Hounds open for the stag—your hawk's a-wing—
Brave days that wait the Louis of the South,
Italy's Janus !

Vic. So, the lawyer's clerk
Won't tell me that I shall repent !

D'O. You give me
Full leave to ask if you repent ?

Vic. Whene'er,
Sufficient time's elapsed for that, you judge !

[*Shouts inside, "KING CHARLES!"*

D'O. Do you repent ?

Vic. [after a slight pause.] . . . I've kept them waiting ?
Yes !

Come in—complete the Abdication, sir !

[*They go out.*

Enter POLYXXENA.

Pol. A shout ? The sycophants are free of Charles !
Oh, is not this like Italy ? No fruit
Of his or my distempered fancy, this—
But just an ordinary fact ! Beside,
Here they've set forms for such proceedings—Victor
Imprisoned his own mother—he should know.
If any, how a son's to be deprived
Of a son's right. Our duty's palpable.
Ne'er was my husband for the wily king
And the unworthy subjects—be it so !
Come you safe out o' them, my Charles ! Our life
Grows not the broad and dazzling life, I dreamed
Might prove your lot—for strength was shut in you
None guessed but I—strength which, untrammelled once,
Had little shamed your vaunted ancestry—
Patience and self-devotion, fortitude,
Simplicity and utter truthfulness
—All which, they shout to lose !

So, now my work
Begins—to save him from regret. Save Charles
Regret?—the noble nature! He's not made
Like the Italians: 'tis a German soul.

CHARLES enters crowned.

Oh, where's the King's heir? Gone!—the Crown-prince?
Gone!—

Where's Savoy? Gone!—Sardinia? Gone!—But Charles
Is left! And when my Rhine-land bowers arrive,
If he looked almost handsome yester-twilight,
As his grey eyes seemed widening into black
Because I praised him, then how will he look?
Farewell, you stripped and whitened mulberry-trees,
Bound each to each by lazy ropes of vine!
Now I'll teach you my language—I'm not forced
To speak Italian now, Charles?

[*She sees the crown.*] What is this?
Answer me—who has done this? Answer!

Cha. He!
I am King now.

Pol. Oh worst, worst, worst of all!
Tell me—what, Victor? He has made you King?
What's he then? What's to follow this? You, King?

Cha. Have I done wrong? Yes—for you were not by
Pol. Tell me from first to last.

Cha. Hush—a new world
Brightens before me; he is moved away
—The dark form that eclipsed it, he subsides
Into a shape supporting me like you,
And I, alone, tend upward, more and more
Tend upward: I am grown Sardinia's King.

Pol. Now stop: was not this Victor, Duke of Savoy
At ten years old?

Cha. He was.

Pol. And the Duke spent,
Since then, just four-and-fifty years in toil
To be—what?

Cha. King.

Pol. Then why unking himself?

Cha. Those years are cause enough.

Pol. The only cause?

Cha. Some new perplexities.

Pol. Which you can solve,

Although he cannot?

Cha. He assures me so.

Pol. And this he means shall last—how long?

Cha. How long?

Think you I fear the perils I confront ?
He 's praising me before the people's face—
My people !

Pol. Then he 's changed—grown kind, the King ?
(Where can the trap be ?)

Cha. Heart and soul I pledge !
My father, could I guard the Crown you gained,
Transmit as I received it,—all good else
Would I surrender !

Pol. Ah, it opens then
Before you—all you dreaded formerly ?
You are rejoiced to be a king, my Charles ?

Cha. So much to dare ? The better ;—much to dread ?
The better. I 'll adventure tho' alone.
Triumph or die, there 's Victor still to witness
Who dies or triumphs—either way, alone !

Pol. Once I had found my share in triumph, Charles,
Or death.

Cha. But you are I ! But you I call
To take Heaven's proxy, vows I tendered Heaven
A moment since. I will deserve the crown !

Pol. You will. [Aside.] No doubt it were a glorious thing
For any people, if a heart like his
Ruled over it. I would I saw the trap !

Enter VICTOR.

'Tis he must show me.

Vic. So the mask falls off
An old man's foolish love at last ! Spare thanks—
I know you, and Polyxena I know.
Here 's Charles—I am his guest now—does he bid me
Be seated ? And my light-haired, blue-eyed child
Must not forget the old man far away
At Chambery, who dozes while she reigns.

Pol. Most grateful shall we now be, talking least
Of gratitude—indeed of anything
That hinders what yourself must have to say
To Charles.

Cha. Pray speak, Sire !

Vic. 'Faith, not much to say—
Only what shows itself, once in the point
Of sight. You are now the King : you 'll comprehend
Much you may oft have wondered at—the shifts,
Dissimulation, wiliness I showed.
For what 's our post ? Here 's Savoy and here 's Piedmont,
Here 's Montferrat—a breadth here, a space there—
To o'er-sweep all these, what 's one weapon worth ?
I often think of how they fought in Greece

(Or Rome, which was it ? You're the scholar, Charles !)
 You made a front-thrust ? But if your shield, too,
 Were not adroitly planted—some shrewd knave
 Reached you behind ; and, him foiled, straight if thong
 And handle of that shield were not cast loose,
 And you enabled to outstrip the wind,
 Fresh foes assailed you, either side ; 'scape these,
 And reach your place of refuge—o'en then, odds
 If the gate opened unless breath enough
 Was left in you to make its lord a speech.
 Oh, you will see !

Cha. No : straight on shall I go.
 Truth helping ; win with it or die with it.
Vic. Faith, Charles, you're not made Europe's fighting-
 man !

Its barrier-guarder, if you please. You hold,
 Not take—consolidate, with envious French
 This side, with Austrians that, these territories
 I held—ay, and will hold . . . which *you* shall hold
 Despite the couple ! But I've surely earned
 Exemption from these weary politics,
 —The privilege to prattle with my son
 And daughter here, tho' Europe waits the while.

Pol. Nay, Sire,—at Chambery, away for ever,
 As soon you'll be, 'tis a farewell we bid you !
 Turn these few fleeting moments to account !
 'Tis just as though it were a death.

Vic. Indeed !

Pol. [Aside.] Is the trap there ?

Cha. Ay, call this parting—death !
 The sacreder your memory becomes.
 If I misrule Sardinia, how bring back
 My father ? No—that thought shall ever urge me.

Vic. I do not mean . . .

Pol. [who watches VICTOR narrowly this while]

Your father does not mean
 That you are ruling for your father's sake :
 It is your people must concern you wholly
 Instead of him. You meant this, Sire ? (He drops
 My hand !)

Cha. That People is now part of me.

Vic. About the People ! I took certain measures
 Some short time since . . Oh, I'm aware you know
 But little of my measures—these affect
 The nobles—we've resumed some grants, imposed
 A tax or two ; prepare yourself, in short,
 For clamours on that score : mark me : you yield
 No jot of what's entrusted you !

Pol. No jot
You yield !

Cha. My father, when I took the oath,
Although my eye might stray in search of yours,
I heard it, understood it, promised God
What you require. Till from this eminence
He moves me, here I keep, nor shall concede
The meanest of my rights.

Vic. [Aside.] The boy's a fool !
—Or rather, I'm a fool : for, what's wrong here ?
To-day the sweets of reigning—let to-morrow
Be ready with its bitters.

Enter D'ORMEA.

There's beside
Somewhat to press upon your notice first.

Cha. Then why delay it for an instant, Sire ?
That Spanish claim, perchance ? And, now you speak,
—This morning, my opinion was mature—
Which, boy-like, I was bashful in producing
To one I ne'er am like to fear in future !
My thought is formed upon that Spanish claim.

Vic. (Betwixt, indeed.) Not now, Charles. You require
A host of papers on it—

D'O. [coming forward.] Here they are.
[To CHA.] I was the minister and much beside—
Of the late monarch : to say little, him
I served ; on you I have, to say e'en less,
No claim. This case contains those papers : with them
I tender you my office.

Vic. [hastily.] Keep him, Charles !
There's reason for it—many reasons : you
Distrust him, nor are so far wrong there,—but
He's mixed up in this matter—he'll desire
To quit you, for occasions known to me :
Do not accept those reasons—have him stay !

Pol. [Aside] His minister thrust on us !
Cha. [to D'ORMEA.] Sir, believe,
In justice to myself, you do not need
E'en this commanding : whatsoe'er might be
My feelings toward you as a private man,
They quit me in the vast and untried field
Of action. Though I shall, myself, (as late
In your own hearing I engaged to do)
Preside o'er my Sardinia, yet your help
Is necessary. Think the past forgotten,
And serve me now !

D'O. I did not offer you

My services—would I could serve you, Sire !
As for the Spanish matter . . .

Vic. But despatch
At least the dead, in my good daughter's phrase,
Before the living ! Help to house me safe
Ere you and D'Ormea set the world a-gape !
Here is a paper—will you overlook
What I propose reserving for my needs ?
I get as far from you as possible.
There's what I reckon my expenditure.

Cha. [reading.] A miserable fifty thousand crowns !

Vic. Oh, quite enough for country gentlemen !
Beside the exchequer happens . . . but find out
All that yourself !

Cha. [still reading.] "Count Tende"—what means this ?

Vic. Me : you were but an infant when I burst
Through the defile of Tende upon France,
Had only my allies kept true to me !
No matter. Tende's, then, a name I take
Just as . . .

D'O. —The Marchioness Sebastian takes
The name of Spigno.

Cha. How, sir ?

Vic. [to D'ORMEA.] Fool ! All that
Was for my own detailing. *[To CHARLES.]* That anon !

Cha. [to D'ORMEA.] Explain what you have said, sir !

D'O. I supposed
The marriage of the King to her I named,
Profoundly kept a secret these few weeks,
Was not to be one, now he's Count

Pol. [Aside.] With us
The minister—with him the mistress !

Cha. [to VICTOR.] No—
Tell me you have not taken her—that woman
To live with, past recall !

Vic. And where's the crime . . .
Pol. [to CHARLES.] True, sir, this is a matter past recall,
And past your cognizance. A day before,
And you had been compelled to note this—now
Why note it ? The King saved his House from shame :
What the Count does is no concern of yours.

Cha. [after a pause.] The Spanish business, D'Ormea !

Vic. Why, my son,
I took some ill-advised . . . one's age, in fact,
Spoils everything : though I was over reached,
A younger brain, we'll trust, may extricate
Sardinia readily. To-morrow, D'Ormea,
Inform the King !

D'O. [*without regarding VICTOR, and leisurely.*] Thus stands the case with Spain :

When first the Infant Carlos claimed his proper Succession to the throne of Tuscany . . .

Vic. I tell you, that stands over ! Let that rest ! There is the policy !

Cha. [*to D'ORMEA.*] Thus much I know, And more—too much : the remedy ?

D'O. Of course ! No glimpse of one—

Vic. No remedy at all ! It makes the remedy itself—time makes it.

D'O. [*to CHARLES*] But if . . .

Vic. [*still more hastily.*] In fine, I shall take care of that—And, with another project that I have . . .

D'O. [*turning on him*] Oh, since Count Tende means to take again King Victor's crown !—

Pol. [*throwing herself at VICTOR's feet.*] E'en now retake it, Sire !

Oh, speak ! We are your subjects both, once more !

Say it—a word effects it ! You meant not,

Nor do mean now, to take it—but you must !

'Tis in you—in your nature—and the shame 's

Not half the shame 'twould grow to afterward !

Cha. Polyxena !

Pol. A word recalls the Knights—

Say it !—What 's promising and what 's the past ?

Say you are still King Victor !

D'O. Letter say

The Count repents, in brief ! [VICTOR rises.]

Cha. With such a crime

I have not charged you, Sire !

Pol. Charles turns from me !

SECOND YEAR 1731.—KING CHARLES.

PART I.

Enter QUEEN POLYXENA and D'ORMEA—A pause.

Pol. And now, sir, what have you to say ?

D O. Count Tende . . .

Pol. Affirm not I betrayed you ; you resolve

On uttering this strange intelligence

—Nay, post yourself to find me ere I reach

The capital, because you know King Charles
 Tarries a day or two at Evian baths
 Behind me :—but take warning,—here and thus

[*Seating herself in the royal seat.*

I listen, if I listen—not your friend.

Explicitly the statement, if you still
 Persist to urge it on me, must proceed :
 I am not made for aught else.

D'O. Good ! Count Tende . . .

Pol. I, who mistrust you, shall acquaint King Charles,
 Who even more mistrusts you.

D'O. Does he so ?

Pol. Why should he not ?

D'O. Ay, why not ? Motives seek
 You virtuous people, motives ! Say, I serve
 God at the devil's bidding—will that do ?
 I'm proud : our People have been pacified
 (Really I know not how)—

Pol. By truthfulness.

D'O. Exactly ; that shows I had nought to do
 With pacifying them : our foreign perils
 Also exceed my means to stay : but here
 'Tis otherwise, and my pride's piqued. Count Tende
 Completes a full year's absence : would you, madam,
 Have the old monarch back, his mistress back,
 His measures back ? I pray you, act upon
 My counsel, or they will be.

Pol. When ?

D'O. Let's think.
 Home-matters settled—Victor's coming now ;
 Let foreign matters settle—Victor's here :
 Unless I stop him ; as I will, this way.

Pol. [reading the papers he presents.] If this should prove a
 plot 'twixt you and Victor ?
 You seek annoyances to give him pretext
 For what you say you fear !

D'O. Oh, possibly !
 I go for nothing. Only show King Charles
 That thus Count Tende purposes return,
 And style me his inviter, if you please.

Pol. Half of your tale is true ; most like, the Count
 Seeks to return : but why stay you with us ?
 To aid in such emergencies.

D'O. Keep safe
 Those papers : or to serve me, leave no proof
 I thus have counselled : when the Count returns,
 And the King abdicates, 'twill stead me little
 To have thus counselled.

Pol. The King abdicate !

D'O. He's good, we knew long since—wise, we discover—
Firm, let us hope :—but I'd have gone to work
With him away. Well !

[CHARLES without.] In the Council Chamber ?

D'O. All's lost !

Pol. Oh, surely not King Charles ! He's
changed—

That's not this year's care-burthened voice and step ;
'Tis last year's step—the Prince's voice !

D'O. I know !

Enter CHARLES—D'ORMEA retiring a little.

Cha. Now wish me joy, Polyxena ! Wish it me
The old way ! [She embraces him.

There was too much cause for that !

But I have found myself again ! What's news
At Turin ? Oh, if you but felt the load
I'm free of—free ! I said this year would end
Or it, or me—but I am free, thank God !

Pol. How, Charles ?

Cha. You do not guess ? The day I found
Sardinia's hideous coil, at home, abroad,
And how my father was involved in it,—
Of course, I vowed to rest or smile no more
Until I freed his name from obloquy.
We did the people right—'twas much to gain
That point, redress our nobles' grievance too—
But that took place here, was no crying shame :
All must be done abroad,—if I abroad
Appeased the justly-angered Powers, destroyed
The scandal, took down Victor's name at last
From a bad eminence, I then might breathe
And rest ! No moment was to lose. Behold
The proud result—a Treaty, Austria, Spain
Agree to—

D'O. [Aside.] I shall merely stipulate
For an experienced headsman.

Cha. Not a soul
Is compromised : the blotted Past's a blank :
Even D'Ormea will escape unquestioned. See !
It reached me from Vienna; I remained
At Evian to despatch the Count his news;
Tis gone to Chambery a week ago—
And here am I : do I deserve to feel
Your warm white arms around me ?

D'O. [coming forward.] He knows that ?

Cha. What, in Heaven's name, means this ?

D'O. He knows that matters

Are settled at Vienna ? Not too late !

Plainly, unless you post this very hour

Some man you trust (say, me) to Chambery,

And take precautions I 'll acquaint you with,

Your father will return here.

Cha. Is he crazed,

This D'Ormea ? Here ? For what ? As well return

To take his crown !

D'O. He will return for that.

Cha. [to POLYXENA.] You have not listened to this man ?

Pol. He spoke

About your safety—and I listened.

[*He disengages himself from her arms.*

Cha. [to D'ORMEA.] What

Apprised you of the Count's intentions ?

D'O. Me ?

His heart, Sire ; you may not be used to read

Such evidence, however ; therefore read

[*Pointing to POLYXENA's papers.*

My evidence.

Cha. [to POLYXENA.] Oh, worthy this of you !

And of your speech I never have forgotten,

Tho' I professed forgetfulness ; which haunts me

As if I did not know how false it was ;

Which made me toil unconsciously thus long

That there might be no least occasion left

For aught of its prediction coming true !

And now, when there is left no least occasion

To instigate my father to such crime ;

When I might venture to forget (I hoped)

That speech and recognise Polyxena—

Oh, worthy, to revive, and tenfold worse,

That plague now ! D'Ormea at your ear, his slanders

Still in your hand ! Silent ?

Pol. As the wronged are.

Cha. And, D'Ormea, pray, since when have you presumed

To spy upon my father ? (I conceive

What that wise paper shows, and easily.)

Since when ?

D'O. The when, and where, and how, belong
To me. 'Tis sad work, but I deal in such.

You oftentimes serve yourself—I 'd serve you here :

Use makes me not so squeamish. In a word,

Since the first hour he went to Chambery,

Of his seven servants, five have I suborned.

Cha. You hate my father ?

D'O.

Oh, just as you will!

[Looking at POLYXENA.]

A minute since, I loved him—hate him, now !
 What matters ?—If you 'll ponder just one thing :
 Has he that Treaty ?—He is setting forward
 Already. Are your guards here ?

Cha.

Well for you

They are not ! [To POL.] Him I knew of old, but you—
 To hear that pickthank further his designs ! [To D'O.
 Guards ?—were they here, I 'd bid them, for your trouble,
 Arrest you.

D'O. Guards you shall not want. I lived
 The servant of your choice, not of your need.
 You never greatly needed me till now
 That you discard me. This is my arrest.
 Again I tender you my charge—its duty
 Would bid me press you read those documents.

Here, Sire ! [Offering his badge of office.]

Cha. [taking it.] The papers also ! Do you think
 I dare not read them ?

Pol.

Read them, sir !

Cha.

They prove

My father, still a month within the year
 Since he so solemnly consigned it me .
 Means to resume his crown ? They shall prove that
 Or my best dungeon . . .

D'O.

Even say, Chambery !

'Tis vacant, I surmise, by this.

Cha.

You prove

Your words or pay their forfeit, sir. Go there !
 Polyxena, one chance to rend the veil
 Thickening and blackening 'twixt us two ! Do say,
 You 'll see the falsehood of the charges proved !
 Do say, at least, you wish to see them proved
 False charges—my heart's love of other times !

Pol. Ah, Charles !*Cha.* [to D'ORMEA.] Precede me, sir !*D'O.*

And I 'm at length

A martyr for the truth ! No end, they say,
 Of miracles. My conscious innocence !

[As they go out, enter—by the middle door—at which he
 pauses—VICTOR.]

Vic. Sure I heard voices ? No ! Well, I do best
 To make at once for this, the heart o' the place.
 The old room ! Nothing changed !—So near my seat,
 D'Ormea ? [Pushing away the stool which is by the KING's
 chair.]

I want that meeting over first,

I know not why. Tush, D'Ormea won't be slow
 To hearten me, the supple knave ! That burst
 Of spite so eased him ! He 'll inform me . . .

What ?

Why come I hither ? All 's in rough—let all
 Remain rough ; there 's full time to draw back—nay,
 There 's nought to draw back from, as yet ; whereas,
 If reason should be, to arrest a course
 Of error—reason good, to interpose
 And save, as I have saved so many times,
 Our House, admonish my son's giddy youth,
 Relieve him of a weight that proves too much—
 Now is the time,—or now, or never. 'Faith,
 This kind of step is pitiful—not due
 To Charles, this stealing back—hither, because
 He 's from his Capital ! Oh, Victor ! Victor !
 But thus it is : the age of crafty men
 Is loathsome ; youth contrives to carry off
 Dissimulation ; we may intersperse
 Extenuating passages of strength,
 Ardour, vivacity, and wit —may turn
 E'en guile into a voluntary grace,—
 But one's old age, when graces drop away
 And leave guile the pure staple of our lives—
 Ah, loathsome !

Not so—or why pause I ? Turin
 Is mine to have, were I so minded, for
 The asking ; all the Army 's mine—I 've witnessed
 Each private fight beneath me ; all the Court 's
 Mine too ; and, best of all, my D'Ormea 's still
 His D'Ormea ; no ! There 's some grace clinging yet.
 Had I decided on this step, ere midnight
 I 'd take the crown.

No ! Just this step to rise
 Exhausts me ! Here am I arrived : the rest
 Must be done for me. Would I could sit here
 And let things right themselves, the masque unmasque
 —Of the King, crownless, grey hairs and hot blood,—
 The young King, crowned, but calm before his time,
 They say,—the eager woman with her taunts,—
 And the sad earnest wife who motions me
 Away—ay, there she knelt to me ! E'en yet
 I can return and sleep at Chanibery
 A dream out. Rather shake it off at Turin,
 King Victor ! Is 't to Turin—yes, or no ?
 'Tis this relentless noonday-lighted chamber,
 Lighted like life, but silent as the grave,
 That disconcerts me ! There must be the change—

No silence last year : some one flung doors wide
 (Those two great doors which scrutinise me now)
 And out I went 'mid crowds of men—men talking,
 Men watching if my lip fell or brow changed ;
 Men saw me safe forth—put me on my road :
 That makes the misery of this return !
 Oh, had a battle done it ! Had I dropped
 —Haling some battle, three entire days old,
 Hither and thither by the forehead—dropped
 In Spain, in Austria, best of all, in France—
 Spurned on its horns or underneath its hooves,
 When the spent monster goes upon its knees
 To pad and pass the prostrate wretch—I, Victor,
 Sole to have stood up against France—beat down
 By inches, brayed to pieces finally
 By some vast unimaginable charge,
 A flying hell of horse and foot and guns
 Over me, and all's lost, for ever lost,
 There's no more Victor when the world wakes up !
 Then silence, as of a raw battle-field,
 Throughout the world. Then after (as whole days
 After, you catch at intervals faint noise
 Thro' the stiff crust of frozen blood)—there creeps
 A rumour forth, so faint, no noise at all,
 That a strange old man, with face outworn for wounds,
 Is stumbling on from frontier town to town,
 Begging a pittance that may help him find
 His Turin out ; what scorn and laughter follow
 The coin you fling into his cap : and last,
 Some bright morn, how men crowd about the midst
 Of the market-place, where takes the old king breath
 Ere with his crutch he strike the palace-gate
 Wide ope !

To Turin, yes or no—or no ?

Re-enter CHARLES with papers.

Cha. Just as I thought ! A miserable falsehood
 Of hirelings discontented with their pay
 And longing for enfranchisement ! A few
 Testy expressions of old age that thinks
 To keep alive its dignity o'er slaves
 By means that suit their natures !

[Tearing them.] Thus they shake
 My faith in Victor ! [Turning, he discovers VICTOR.]

Vic. [after a pause.] Not at Evian, Charles ?
 What's this ? Why do you run to close the doors ?
 No welcome for your father ?

Cha. [Aside.] Not his voice !

What would I give for one imperious tone
Of the old sort ! That's gone for ever.

Vic. Must
I ask once more . . .

Cha. No—I concede it, sir !
You are returned for . . . true, your health declines—
True, Chambéry's a bleak unkindly spot ;
You'd choose one fitter for your final lodge—
Veneria—or Moncaglier—ay, that's close,
And I concede it.

Vic. I received advices
Of the conclusion of the Spanish matter
Dated from Evian baths . . .

Cha. And you forbore
To visit me at Evian, satisfied
The work I had to do would fully task
The little wit I have, and that your presence
Would only disconcert me—

Vic. Charles ?
Cha. —Me—set

For ever in a foreign course to yours,
And . . .

Sir, this way of wile were good to catch.
But I have not the slight of it. The truth !
Though I sink under it ! What brings you here ?

Vic. Not hope of this reception, certainly,
From one who'd scarce assume a stranger mode
Of speech, did I return to bring about
Some awfullest calamity !

Cha. —You mean,
Did you require your crown again ! Oh yes,
I should speak otherwise ! But turn not that
To jesting ! Sir, the truth ! Your health declines ?
Is aught deficient in your equipage ?
Wisely you seek myself to make complaint,
And foil the malice of the world which laughs
At petty discontents ; but I shall care
That not a soul knows of this visit. Speak !

Vic. [Aside.] Here is the grateful, much-professing son
Who was to worship me, and for whose sake
I think to waive my plans of public good !

[Aloud.] Nay, Charles, if I did seek to take once more
My crown, were so disposed to plague myself—
What would be warrant for this bitterness ?

I gave it—grant, I would resume it—well ?

Cha. I should say simply—leaving out the why
And how—you made me swear to keep that crown
And as you then intended . . .

Vic. Fool ! What way
 Could I intend or not intend ? As man,
 With a man's life, when I say " I intend,"
 I can intend up to a certain point,
 No further. I intended to preserve
 The Crown of Savoy and Sardinia whole :
 And if events arise demonstrating
 The way I took to keep it, rather 's like
 To lose it . . .

Cha. Keep within your sphere and mine !
 It is God's province we usurp on, else.
 Here, blindfold thro' the maze of things we walk
 By a slight thread of false, true, right and wrong ;
 All else is rambling and presumption. I
 Have sworn to keep this kingdom : there 's my truth.

Vic. Truth, boy, is here-- within my breast ; and in
 Your recognition of it, truth is, too ;
 And in the effect of all this tortuous dealing
 With falsehood, used to carry out the truth,
 —In its success, this falsehood turns, again,
 Truth for the world ! But you are right : these themes
 Are over-subtle. I should rather say
 In such a case, frankly,—it fails, my scheme :
 I hoped to see you bring about, yourself,
 What I must bring about : I interpose
 On your behalf--with my son's good in sight—
 To hold what he is nearly letting go—
 Confirm his title-- add a grace, perhaps—
 There 's Sicily, for instance,—granted me
 And taken back, some years since —till I give
 That island with the rest, my work 's half-done.
 For his sake, therefore, as of those he rules . . .

Cha. Our sakes are one—and that, you could not say,
 Because my answer would present itself
 Forthwith ;—a year has wrought an age's change :
 This people 's not the people now, you once
 Could benefit ; nor is my policy
 Your policy.

Vic. [with an outburst.] I know it ! You undo
 All I have done—my life of toil and care
 I left you this the absolutest rule
 In Europe--do you think I will sit still
 And see you throw all power off to the people—
 See my Sardinia, that has stood apart,
 Join in the mad and democratic whirl,
 Whereto I see all Europe hasten full-tide ?
 England casts off her kings—France mimics England
 This realm I hoped was safe ! Yet here I talk,

When I can save it, not by force alone,
But bidding plagues, which follow sons like you,
Fasten upon my disobedient . . .

[*Recollecting himself.*] Surely
I could say this—if minded so—my son ?
Cha. You could not ! Bitterer curses than your curse
Have I long since denounced upon myself
If I misused my power. In fear of these
I entered on those measures—will abide
By them : so, I should say, Count Tende . . .

Vic. No !
But no ! But if, my Charles, your—more than old—
Half-foolish father urged these arguments,
And then confessed them futile, but said plainly
That he forgot his promise, found his strength
Fail him, had thought at savage Chambery
Too much of brilliant Turin, Rivoli here,
And Susa, and Veneria, and Superga—
Pined for the pleasant places he had built
When he was fortunate and young—

Cha. My father !
Vic. Stay yet—and if he said he could not die
Deprived of baubles he had put aside,
He deemed, for ever—of the Crown that binds
Your brain up, whole, sound, and impregnable,
Creating kingliness—the Sceptre, too,
Whose mere wind, should you wave it, back would beat
Invaders—and the golden Ball which throbs
As if you grasped the palpitating heart
In leed o' the realm, to mould as you may choose !
—If I must totter up and down the streets
My sires built, where myself have introduced
And fostered laws and letters, sciences,
The civil and the military arts—
Stay, Charles—I see you letting me pretend
To live my former self once more—King Victor,
The venturous yet politic—they style me
Again, the Father of the Prince—friends wink
Good-humouredly at the delusion you
So sedulously guard from all rough truths
That else would break upon the dotage !—You—
Whom now I see preventing my old shame—
I tell not, point by cruel point, my tale—
For is 't not in your breast my brow is hid ?
Is not your hand extended ? Say you not . . .

Enter D'ORMEA, leading in POLYXENA.

Pol. [advancing and withdrawing CHARLES—to VICTOR.]
 In this conjuncture, even, he would say—
 (Tho' with a moistened eye and quivering lip)
 The suppliant is my father—I must save
 A great man from himself, nor see him fling
 His well-earned fame away: there must not follow
 Ruin so utter, a break-down of worth
 So absolute: no enemy shall learn,
 He thrust his child 'twixt danger and himself,
 And, when that child somehow stood danger out,
 Stole back with serpent wiles to ruin Charles
 — Body, that's much, —and soul, that's more—and realm,
 That's most of all! No enemy shall say . . .

D'O. Do you repent, sir?

Vic. [resuming himself.] D'Ormea? This is well!
 Worthily done, King Charles, craftily done!
 Judiciously you post these, to o'erhear
 The little your importunate father thrusts
 Himself on you to say! Ay, they'll correct
 The amiable blind facility
 You showed in answering his peevish suit:
 What can he need to sue for? Bravely, D'Ormea,
 Have you fulfilled your office: but for you,
 The old Count might have drawn some few more livres
 To swell his income! Had you, Lady, missed
 The moment, a permission had been granted
 To build afresh my ruinous old pile—
 But you remembered properly the list
 Of wise precautions I took when I gave
 Nearly as much away—to reap the fruits
 I should have looked for!

Cha. Thanks, sir: degrade me,
 So you remain yourself. Adieu!

Vic. I'll not
 Forget it for the future, nor presume
 Next time to slight such potent mediators!
 Had I first moved them both to intercede,
 I might have had a chamber in Moneaglier
 —Who knows?

Cha. Adieu!

Vic. You bid me this adieu
 With the old spirit?

Cha. Adieu!

Vic. Charles—Charles—

Cha. Adieu!
 [VICTOR goes.]

Cha. You were mistaken, Marquis, as you hear !
 'Twas for another purpose the Count came
 The Count desires Moneaglier. Give the order !

D'O. [leisurely.] Your minister has lost your confidence,
 Asserting late, for his own purposes,
 Count Tende would . . .

Cha. [flinging his badge back.] Be still our minister !
 And give a loose to your insulting joy—
 It irks me more thus stifled than expressed.
 Loose it !

D'O. There 's none to loose, alas !—I see
 I never am to die a martyr !

Pol. Charles !

Cha. No praise, at least, Polyxena—no praise !

KING CHARLES : PART II.

Night.—D'ORMEA scated, folding papers he has been examining.

This at the last effects it : now, King Charles
 Or else King Victor—that 's a balance : now
 For D'Ormea the arch-culprit, either turn
 O' the scale,—that's sure enough. A point to solve,
 My masters—moralists—whate'er 's your style !
 When you discover why I push myself
 Into a pitfall you 'd pass safely by,
 Impart to me among the rest ! No matter.
 Prompt are the righteous ever with their rede
 To us the wicked—lesson them this once !
 For safe among the wicked are you set
 Old D'Ormea. We lament life's brevity,
 Yet quarter e'en the threescore years and ten.
 Nor stick to call the quarter roundly "life."
 D'Ormea was wicked, say, some twenty years ;
 A tree so long was stunted ; afterward,
 What if it grew, continued growing, till
 No fellow of the forest equalled it ?
 'Twas a shrub then—a shrub it still must be :
 While forward saplings, at the outset checked,
 In virtue of that first sprout keep their style
 Amid the forest's green fraternity.
 Thus I shoot up—to surely get lopped down,
 And bound up for the burning. Now for it !

Enter CHARLES and POLYXENA with Attendants.

D'O. [rises.] Sire, in the due discharge of this my office—
This enforced summons of yourself from Turin,
And the disclosure I am bound to make
To-night,—there must already be, I feel,
So much that wounds . . .

Cha. Well, sir?

D'O. —That I, perchance,
May utter, also, what, another time,
Would irk much,—it may prove less irksome now.

Cha. What would you utter?

D'O. That I from my soul
Grieve at to-night's event : for you I grieve—
E'en grieve for . . .

Cha. Tush, another time for talk !
My kingdom is in imminent danger ?

D'O. Let
The Count communicate with France—its King,
His grandson, will have Fleury's aid for this,
Though for no other war.

Cha. First for the levies :
What forces can I muster presently ?

[D'ORMEA delivers papers which CHARLES inspects.
Cha. Good—very good. Montorio . . . how is this ?
—Equips me double the old complement
Of soldiers ?

D'O. Since his land has been relieved
From double impost, this he manages :
But under the late monarch . . .

Cha. Peace. I know.
Count Spava has omitted mentioning
What proxy is to head these troops of his.

D'O. Count Spava means to head his troops himself.
Something 's to fight for now ; "whereas," says he,
"Under the Sovereign's father" . . .

Cha. It would seem
That all my people love me.

D'O. Yes.
[To POLYXENA while CHARLES continues to inspect the papers.
A temper

Like Victor's may avail to keep a state ;
He terrifies men and they fall not off ;
Good to restrain ; best, if restraint were all :
But, with the silent circle round him, ends
Such sway. Our King's begins precisely there.
For to suggest, impel, and set at work,
Is quite another function. Men may slight,

In time of peace, the King who brought them peace :
 In war,—his voice, his eyes, help more than fear.
 They love you, Sire !

Cha. [to Attendants.] Bring the Regalia forth.
 Quit the room. And now, Marquis, answer me—
 Why should the King of France invade my realm ?

D'O. Why ? Did I not acquaint your Majesty
 An hour ago ?

Cha. I choose to hear again
 What then I heard.

D'O. Because, Sire, as I said,
 Your father is resolved to have the crown
 At any risk ; and, as I judge, calls in
 These foregners to aid him.

Cha. And your reason
 For saying this ?

D'O. [Aside.] Ay, just his father's way !
 [To CHA.] The Count wrote yesterday to your Forces' Chief,
 Rhebinder,—made demand of help —

Cha. To try
 Rhebinder—he 's of alien blood : aught else ?

D'O. Receiving a refusal,—some hours after,
 The Count called on Del Borgo to deliver
 The Act of Abdication : he refusing
 Or hesitating, rather —

Cha. What ensued ?

D'O. At midnight, only two hours since, at Turin,
 He rode in person to the citadel
 With one attendant, to the Soccorso gate,
 And bade the governor, San Remi, open —
 Admit him.

Cha. For a purpose I divine,
 These three were faithful, then ?

D'O. They told it me :
 And I —

Cha. Most faithful —

D'O. Tell it you—with this,
 Moreover, of my own : if, an hour hence,
 You have not interposed, the Count will be
 Upon his road to France for succour.

Cha. Good !
 You do your duty, now, to me your monarch
 Fully, I warrant ?—have, that is, your project
 For saving both of us disgrace, past doubt ?

D'O. I have my counsel,—and the only one.
 A month since, I besought you to employ
 Restraints which had prevented many a pang :
 But now the harsher course must be pursued.

These papers, made for the emergency,
 Will pain you to subscribe : this is a list
 Of those suspected merely—men to watch ;
 This—of the few of the Count's very household,
 You must, however reluctantly, arrest,
 While here 's a method of remonstrance (sure
 Not stronger than the case demands) to take
 With the Count's self.

Cha. Deliver those three papers.

Pol. [while CHARLES inspects them—to D'ORMEA.]
 Your measures are not over-harsh, sir : France
 Will hardly be deterred from coming hither
 By these.

D'O. What good of my proposing measures
 Without a chance of their success ? E'en these,
 Hear what he 'll say at my presenting.

Cha. [who has signed them.] There !
 About the warrants ! You 've my signature.
 What turns you pale ? I do my duty by you
 In acting boldly thus on your advice.

D'O. [reading them separately.] Arrest the people I sus-
 pected merely ?

Cha. Did you suspect them ?
D'O. Doubtless : but—but—Sire,
 This Forquieri 's governor of Turin ;
 And Rivarol and he have influence over
 Half of the capital.—Rabella, too ?
 Why, Sire—

Cha. Oh, leave the fear to me.
D'O. [still reading.] You bid me
 Incarcerate the people on this list ?
 Sire—

Cha. Why, you never bade arrest those men,
 So close related to my father too,
 On trifling grounds ?

D'O. Oh, as for that, St. George,
 President of Chambery's senators,
 Is hatching treason—but—

[Still more troubled.] Sire, Count Cumiane
 Is brother to your father's wife ! What 's here ?
 Arrest the wife herself ?

Cha. You seem to think it
 A venial crime to plot against me. Well ?
D'O. [who has read the last paper.] Wherefore am I thus
 ruined ? Why not take
 My life at once ? This poor formality
 Is, let me say, unworthy you ! Prevent it,
 You, madam ! I have served you, am prepared

For all disgraces—only, let disgrace
 Be plain, be proper—proper for the world
 To pass its judgment on 'twixt you and me !
 Take back your warrant—I will none of it.

Cha. Here is a man to talk of fickleness !
 He stakes his life upon my father's falsehood ;
 I bid him——

D'O. Not you ! Were he trebly false,
 You do not bid me——

Cha. Is 't not written there ?
 I thought so : give—I 'll set it right.

D'O. Is it there ?
 Oh, yes—and plain—arrest him—now—drag here
 Your father ! And were all six times as plain,
 Do you suppose I 'd trust it ?

Cha. Just one word !
 You bring him, taken in the act of flight,
 Or else your life is forfeit.

D'O. Ay, to Turin
 I bring him ? And to-morrow ?

Cha. Here and now !
 The whole thing is a lie—a hateful lie—
 As I believed and as my father said.
 I knew it from the first, but was compelled
 To circumvent you ; and the crafty D'Ormea,
 That baffled Alberoni and tricked Coscia,
 The miserable sower of such discord
 'Twixt sire and son, is in the toils at last !
 Oh, I see ! you arrive—this plan of yours.
 Weak as it is, torments sufficiently
 A sick, old, peevish man—wrings hasty speech
 And ill-considered threats from him ; that's noted ;
 Then out you ferret papers, his amusement
 In lonely hours of lassitude—examining
 The day-by-day report of your paid creatures—
 And back you come—all was not ripe, you find,
 And, as you hope, may keep from ripening yet—
 But you were in bare time ! Only, 'twere best
 I never saw my father—these old men
 Are potent in excuses—and, meantime,
 D'Ormea 's the man I cannot do without.

Pol. Charles——

Cha. Ah, no question ! You 're for D'Ormea too !
 You 'd have me eat and drink, and sleep, live, die
 With this lie coil'd about me, choking me !
 No, no—he 's caught ! [to D'ORMEA.] You venture life, you say,
 Upon my father's perfidy ; and I
 Have, on the whole, no right to disregard

The chains of testimony you thus wind
About me; though I do—do from my soul
Discredit them: still I must authorise
These measures—and I will. Perugia!

[*Many Officers enter.*] Count—

You and Solar, with all the force you have,
Are at the Marquis' orders: what he bids,
Implicitly perform! You are to bring
A traitor here; the man that's likest one
At present, fronts me; you are at his beck
For a full hour; he undertakes to show you
A fouler than himself,—but, failing that,
Return with him, and, as my father lives,
He dies this night! The clemency you've blamed
So oft, shall be revoked—rights exercised
That I've abjured.

[To D'ORMEA.] Now, Sir, about the work!
To save your King and country! Take the warrant!

D'O. [*boldly to PERUGIA.*] You hear the Sovereign's mandate,
Count Perugia?

Obey me! As your diligence, expect
Reward! All follow to Montcagliere!

Cha. [*in great anguish.*] D'Ormen! [D'ORMEA goes.
He goes, lit up with that appalling smile!]

[*To POLYXENA, after a pause.* At least you understand all this?

Pol. These means
Of our defence—these measures of precaution?

Cha. It must be the best way. I should have else
Withered beneath his scorn.

Pol. What would you say?
Cha. Why, you don't think I mean to keep the crown,

Polyxena?

Pol. You then believe the story
In spite of all—That Victor's coming?

Cha. Believe it?
I know that he is coming—feel the strength

That has upheld me leave me at his coming!

'Twas mine, and now he takes his own again.

Some kinds of strength are well enough to have;
But who's to have that strength? Let my crown go!

I meant to keep it—but I cannot—cannot!

Only, he shall not taunt me—he, the first—

See if he would not be the first to taunt me

With having left his kingdom at a word—

With letting it be conquered without stroke—

With . . no—no—'tis no worse than when he left it,

I've just to bid him take it, and, that over,

We 'll fly away—fly—for I loathe this Turin,
 This Rivoli, all titles loathe, and state.
 We 'd best go to your country—unless God
 Send I die now !

Pol. Charles, hear me !

Cha. —And again

Shall you be my Polyxena—you 'll take me
 Out of this woe ! Yes, do speak—and keep speaking !
 I would not let you speak just now, for fear
 You 'd counsel me against him : but talk, now,
 As we two used to talk in blessed times :
 Bid me endure all his caprices ; take me
 From this mad post above him !

Pol. I believe

We are undone, but from a different cause.
 All your resources, down to the least guard,
 Are now at D'Ormea's beck. What if, this while,
 He acts in concert with your father ? We
 Indeed were lost. This lonely Rivoli—
 Where find a better place for them ?

Cha. [pacing the room.] And why

Does Victor come ? To undo all that 's done !
 Restore the past—prevent the future ! Seat
 His mistress in your seat, and place in mine
 . . . Oh, my own people, whom will you find there,
 To ask of, to consult with, to care for,
 To hold up with your hands ? Whom ? One that 's false—
 False—from the head 's crown to the foot 's sole, false !
 The best is, that I knew it in my heart
 From the beginning, and expected this,
 And hated you, Polyxena, because
 You saw thro' him, though I too saw thro' him.
 Saw that he meant this while he crowned me, while
 He prayed for me,—nay, while he kissed my brow,
 I saw—

Pol. But if your measures take effect,
 And D'Ormea's true to you ?

Cha. Then worst of all !

I shall have loosed that callous wretch on him !
 Well may the woman taunt him with his child--
 I, eating here his bread, clothed in his clothes,
 Seated upon his seat, give D'Ormea leave
 To outrage him ! We talk—perchance they tear
 My father from his bed—the old hands feel
 For one who is not, but who should be there—
 And he finds D'Ormea ! D'Ormea, too, finds him !
 —The crowded chamber when the lights go out—
 Closed doors—the horrid scuffle in the dark—

The accursed promptings of the minute ! My guards !
To horse—and after, with me—and prevent !

Pol. [seizing his hand.] King Charles ! Pause here upon
this strip of time

Allotted you out of eternity !

Crowns are from God—in his name you hold yours.

Your life's no least thing, were it fit your life

Should be abjured along with rule ; but now,

Keep both ! Your duty is to live and rule—

You, who would vulgarly look fine enough

In the world's eye, deserting your soul's charge,—

Ay, you would have men's praise—this Rivoli

Would be illuminated : while, as 'tis, no doubt,

Something of stain will ever rest on you ;

No one will rightly know why you refused

To abdicate ; they 'll talk of deeds you could

Have done, no doubt,—nor do I much expect

Future achievements will blot out the past,

Envelop it in haze—nor shall we two

Be happy any more ; 'twill be, I feel,

Only in moments that the duty 's seen

As palpably as now—the months, the years

Of painful indistinctness are to come,

While daily must we tread these palace rooms

Pregnant with memories of the past : your eye

May turn to mine and find no comfort there,

Through fancies that beset me, as yourself,

Of other courses, with far other issues,

We might have taken this great night—such bear,

As I will bear ! What matters happiness ?

Duty ! There's man's one moment—this is yours !

[Putting the crown on his head, and the sceptre in his hand, she places him on his seat : a long pause and silence.]

Enter D'ORMEA and VICTOR.

Vic. At last I speak ; but once—that once, to you !

'Tis you I ask, not these your varlety,

Who's King of us ?

Cha. [from his seat.] Count Tende . . .

Vic. What your spies

Assert I ponder in my soul, I say—

Here to your face, amid your guards ! I choose

To take again the crown whose shadow I gave—

For still its potency surrounds the weak

White locks their felon hands have discomposed.

Or, I 'll not ask who 's King, but simply, who

Withholds the crown I claim ? Deliver it !
 I have no friend in the wide world : nor France
 Nor England cares for me : you see the sum
 Of what I can avail. Deliver it !

Cha. Take it, my father !

And now say in turn,

Was it done well, my father—sure not well,
 To try me thus ! I might have seen much cause
 For keeping it—too easily seen cause !
 But, from that moment, e'en more wofully
 My life had pined away, than pine it will.
 Already you have much to answer for.
 My life to pine is nothing,—her sunk eyes
 Were happy once ! No doubt, my people think
 That I 'm their King still . . . but I cannot strive !
 Take it !

Vic. [one hand on the crown *CHARLES* offers, the other on his neck.] So few years give it quietly,
 My son ! It will drop from me. See you not ?
 A crown 's unlike a sword to give away—
 That, let a strong hand to a weak hand give !
 But crowns should slip from palsied brows to heads
 Young as this head—yet mine is weak enough,
 E'en weaker than I knew. I seek for phrases
 To vindicate my right. 'Tis of a piece !
 All is alike gone by with me—who beat
 Once D'Orleans in his lines—his very lines !
 To have been Eugene's comrade, Louis' rival,
 And now . . .

Cha. [putting the crown on him, to the rest.] The King
 speaks, yet none kneels, I think !

Vic. I am then King ! As I became a King
 Despite the nations—kept myself a King—
 So I die King, with Kingship dying too
 Around me ! I have lasted Europe's time !
 What wants my story of completion ? Where
 Must needs the damning break show ! Who mistrusts
 My children here—tell they of any break
 'Twixt my day's sunrise and its fiery fall ?
 And who were by me when I died but they ?
 Who ?—D'Ormea there !

Cha.

What means he ?

Vic.

Ever there !

Charles—how to save your story ? Mine must go !
 Say—say that you refused the crown to me—
 Charles, yours shall be my story ! You inumured
 Me, say, at Rivoli. A single year
 I spend without a sight of you, then die—

That will serve every purpose—tell that tale
The world !

Cha. Mistrust me ? Help !

Vic. Psst help, past reach !

'Tis in the heart—you cannot reach the heart :
This broke mine, that I did believe, you, Charles,
Would have denied and so disgraced me.

Pol. Charles
Has never ceased to be your subject, Sire !
He reigned at first through setting up yourself
As pattern : if he e'er seemed harsh to you,
'Twas from a too intense appreciation
Of your own character : he acted you—
Ne'er for an instant did I think it real,
Or look for any other than this end.
I hold him worlds the worse on that account ;
But so it was.

Cha. [to POLYX.] I love you, now, indeed !
[To VICTOR.] You never knew me !

Vic. Hardly till this moment,
When I seem learning many other things,
Because the time for using them is past.
If 'twere to do again ! That's idly wished.
Truthfulness might prove policy as good
As guile. Is this my daughter's forehead ? Yes—
I've made it fitter now to be a Queen's
Than formerly—I've ploughed the deep lines there
Which keep too well a crown from slipping off !
No matter. Guile has made me King again.
Louis—'twas in King Victor's time—long since,
When Louis reign'd—and, also, Victor reign'd—
How the world talks already of us two !
God of eclipse and each discolour'd star,
Why do I linger then ?

Ha ! Where lurks he ?
D'Ormea ! Come nearer to your King ! Now stand !
[Collecting his strength as D'ORMEA approaches.
But you lied, D'Ormea ! I do not repent.

[Lies.

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY.

A Play.

"Ivy and violet, what do ye here,
"With blossom and shoot in the warm spring weather,
"Hiding the arms of Monchenei and Verc?"

HANMER.

Dedication.

NO ONE LOVES AND HONOURS BARRY CORNWALL MORE THAN
ROBERT BROWNING DOES;

WHO, HAVING NOTHING BETTER THAN THIS PLAY TO
GIVE HIM IN PROOF OF IT,

MUST SAY SO.

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY.

PERSONS.

COLOMBE OF RAVESTEIN, Duchess of Juliers and Cleves.
SABYNE } Her Attendants.
ADOLF }
GUIBERT }
GAUCELME } Courtiers.
MAUFROY }
CLUGNET }
VALENCE, Advocate of Cleves.
PRINCE BERTHOLD, Claimant of the Duchy.
MELCHIOR, his Confidant.

PLACE, *The Palace at Juliers.*

TIME, 16—.

ACT I.

Morning. SCENE.—A corridor leading to the Audience-chamber.

GAUCELME, CLUGNET, MAUFROY, and other Courtiers, round GUIBERT, who is silently reading a paper: as he drops it at the end—

Gui. That this should be her birthday; and the day
We all invested her, twelve months ago,
As the late Duke's true heiress and our liege;
And that this also must become the day . . .
Oh, miserable lady!

1st Court. Ay, indeed?

2nd Court. Well, Guibert?

3rd Court. But your news, my friend, your news !
 The sooner, friend, one learns Prince Berthold's pleasure,
 The better for us all : how writes the Prince ?
 Give me—I'll read it for the common good—

Gui. In time, sir—but, till time comes, pardon me !
 Our old Duke just disclosed his child's retreat,
 Declared her true succession to his rule,
 And died : this birthday was the day, last year,
 We convoyed her from Castle Ravestein—
 That sleeps out trustfully its extreme age
 On the Meuse' quiet bank, where she lived queen
 Over the water-buds,—to Juliers' Court
 With joy and bustle : here again we stand ;
 Sir Gauceline's buckle's constant to his cap—
 To-day's much such another sunny day !

Gau. Come, Guibert—this outgrows a jest, I think !
 You're hardly such a novice as to need
 The lesson, you pretend.

Gui. What lesson, sir ?
 That everybody, if he'd thrive at court,
 Should, first and last of all, look to himself ?
 Why, no : and therefore, with your good example,
 (—Ho, Master Adolf !)—to myself I'll look.

Enter ADOLF.

Gui. The Prince's letter ; why, of all men else,
 Comes it to me ?

Adolf. By virtue of your place,
 Sir Guibert ! 'Twas the Prince's express charge,
 His envoy told us, that the missive thereto
 Should only reach our lady by the hand
 Of whosoever held your place.

Gui. Enough ! [ADOLF retires.]
 Then, gentles, who'll accept a certain poor
 Indifferently honourable place,
 My friends, I make no doubt, have gnashed their teeth
 At leisure minutes these half-dozen years,
 To find me never in the mood to quit ?
 —Who asks may have it, with my blessing, and—
This to present our lady. Who'll accept ?
 You,—you,—you ? There it lies, and may, for me !

Mau. [a youth, picking up the paper, reads aloud.]
 “Prince Berthold, proved by titles following
 “Undoubted Lord of Juliers, comes this day
 “To claim his own, with license from the Pope,
 “The Emperor, the Kings of Spain and France” . . .

Gau. Sufficient “titles following,” I judge !
 Don't read another ! Well,—“to claim his own ? ”

Mau. "And take possession of the Duchy held
"Since twelve months, to the true heir's prejudice,
"By . . . Colombe, Juliers' Mistress, so she thinks,
And Ravestein's mere lady, as we find !

Who wants the place and paper ? Guibert's right !
I hope to climb a little in the world,—
I'd push my fortunes,—but, no more than he,
Could tell her on this happy day of days,
That, save the nosegay in her hand, perhaps,
There's nothing left to call her own ! Sir Clugnet,
You famish for promotion ; what say you ?

Clug. [an old man.] To give this letter were a sort, I take it,
Of service : services ask recompence :
What kind of corner may be Ravestein ?

Gui. The castle ?—Oh, you'd share her tortunes ? Good !
Three walls stand upright, full as good as four,
With no such bad remainder of a roof.

Clug. Oh,—but the Town ?

Gui. Five houses, fifteen huts ;
A church whereto was once a spire, 'tis judged ;
And half a dyke, except in time of thaw

Clug. Still, there's some revenue ?

Gui. Else Heaven forefend !
You hang a beacon out, should fogs increase ;
So when the Autumn floats of pine-wood steer
Safe 'mid the white confusion, thanks to you,
Their grateful raftsmen flings a guilder in ;
—That's if he means to pass your way next time.

Clug. If not ?

Gui. Hang guilders, then—he blesses you !

Clug. What man do you suppose me ? Keep your paper !
And let me say it shows no handsome spirit
To dally with misfortune : keep your place !

Gau. Some one must tell her,

Gui. Some one may : you may !

Gau. Sir Guibert, 'tis no triflē turns me sick
Of court-hypocrisy at years like mine,
But this goes near it. Where's there news at all ?
Who'll have the face, for instance, to affirm
He never heard, e'en while we crowned the girl,
That Juliers' tenure was by Salic law ;
That one, confessed her father's cousin's child,
And, she away, indisputable heir,
Against our choice protesting and the Duke's,
Claimed Juliers ?—nor, as he preferred his claim,
That first this, then another potentate,
Inclined to its allowance ?—I, or you,
Or any one except the lady's self ?

Oh, it had been the direst cruelty
 To break the business to her ! Things might change—
 At all events, we 'd see next masque at end,
 Next mummery over first : and so the edge
 Was taken off sharp tidings as they came,
 Till here 's the Prince upon us, and there 's she
 —Wreathing her hair, a song between her lips,
 With just the faintest notion possible
 That some such claimant earns a livelihood
 About the world, by feigning grievances
 Few pay the story of, but grudge its price,
 And fewer listen to, a second time.
 Your method proves a failure ; now try mine—
 And, since this must be carried . . .

Gui. [snatching the paper from him.] By your leave
 Your zeal transports you ! 'Twill not serve the Prince
 So much as you expect, this course you 'd take ;
 If she leaves quietly her palace,—well :
 But if she died upon its threshold,—no :
 He 'd have the trouble of removing her !
 Come, gentles, we 're all—what the devil knows !
 You, Gaucelme, won't lose character, beside—
 You broke your father's heart superiorly
 To gather his succession—never blush !
 You 're from my province, and, be comforted,
 They tell of it with wonder to this day—
 You can afford to let your talent sleep !
 We 'll take the very worst supposed, as true—
 There, the old Duke knew, when he hid his child
 Among the river-flowers at Ravestein,
 With whom the right lay ! Call the Prince our Duke !
 There, she 's no Duchess, she 's no anything
 More than a young maid with the bluest eyes—
 And now, sirs, we 'll not break this young maid's heart
 Coolly as Gaucelme could and would ! No haste !
 His talent 's full-blown, ours but in the bud—
 We 'll not advance to his perfection yet—
 Will we, Sir Maufroy ? See, I 've ruined Maufroy
 For ever as a courtier !

Gau. Here 's a coil—
 And, count us, will you ? Count its residue,
 This boasted convoy, this day last year's crowd !
 A birthday too—a gratulation-day !
 I 'm dumb : bid that keep silence !

Mau. and others. Eh, Sir Guibert ?
 He 's right : that does say something : that 's bare truth.
 Ten—twelve, I make : a perilous dropping-off !

Gui. Pooh !—is it audience-hour ? The vestibule

Swarms too, I wager, with the common sort
That want our privilege of entry here.

Gau. Adolf! [Re-enter ADOLF.] Who's outside?

Gui. Oh, your looks suffice!

Nobody waiting?

Man. [looking through the door-folds.] Scarce our number!

Gui. 'Sdeath!

Nothing to beg for, to complain about?

It can't be! Ill news spreads, but not so fast

As thus to frighten all the world!

Gau. The world

Lives out of doors, sir—not with you and me
By presence-chamber porches, state-room stairs,
Wherever warmth's perpetual: outside's free
To every wind from every compass-point,
And who may get nipped needs be weather-wise.
The Prince comes and the lady's People go;
The snow-goose settles down, the swallows flee—
Why should they wait for winter-time? 'Tis instinct
Don't you feel somewhat chilly?

Gui. That's their craft?

And last year's crowders-round and criers-forth,
That strewed the garlands, overarched the roads,
Lit up the bonfires, sang the loyal songs!
Well, 'tis my comfort, you could never call me
The People's Friend! The People keep their word—
I keep my place: don't doubt I'll entertain
The People when the Prince comes, and the People
Are talked of!—Then, their speeches—no one tongue
Found respite, not a pen had holiday
—For they wrote, too, as well as spoke, these knaves!
Now see: we tax and tithe them, pill and poll,
They wince and fret enough, but pay they must
—We manage that,—so pay with a good grace
They might as well, it costs so little more.
But when we've done with taxes, meet folk next
Outside the toll-booth and the rating-place,
In public—there they have us if they will,
We're at their mercy after that, you see—
For one tax not ten devils could extort;
Over and above necessity, a grace;
This prompt disbosoming of love, to wit—
Their vine-leaf-wrappage of our tribute-penny,
And crowning attestation, all works well—
Yet this precisely do they thrust on us!
These cappings quick, and crook-and-cringings low,
Hand to the heart, and forehead to the knee,
With grin that shuts the eyes and opes the mouth—

So tender they their love ; and tender made,
 Go home to curse you, the first doit you ask ;
 As if their souls were any longer theirs !
 As if they had not given ample warrant
 To who should clap a collar on their neck,
 Rings in their nose, a goad to either flank,
 And take them for the brute they boast themselves !
 —Stay—there 's a bustle at the outer door—
 And somebody entreating . . . that 's my name !
 Adolf,—I heard my name !

Adolf 'Twas probably
 The Suitor.

Gui. Oh, there is one ?
Adolf. With a suit
 He 'd fain enforce in person.

Gui. The good heart
 —And the great fool ! Just ope the mid-door's fold—
 Is that a lappet of his cloak I see ?

Adolf. If it bear plenteous signs of travel . . . ay,
 The very cloak my comrades tore !

Gui. Why tore ?
Adolf. He seeks the Duchess' presence in that trim :
 Since daybreak was he posted hereabouts
 Lest he should miss the moment.

Gui. Where 's he now ?
Adolf. Gone for a minute possibly, not more.
 They have ado enough to thrust him back.
Gui. Ay—but my name, I caught ?
Adolf. Oh, sir—he said
 —What was it ?—You had known him formerly,
 And, he believed, would help him did you guess
 He waited now—you promised him as much—
 The old plea !—'Faith, he 's back,—renews the charge !
 [Speaking at the door.] So long as the man parleys, peace outside !

Nor be too ready with your halberts, there !

Gau. My horse bespattered, as he blocked the path,
 A thin sour man not unlike somebody.

Adolf. He holds a paper in his breast, whereon
 He glances when his cheeks flush and his brow
 At each repulse —

Gau. I noticed he 'd a brow.
Adolf. So glancing, he grows calmer, leans awhile
 Over the balustrade, adjusts his dress,
 And presently turns round, quiet again,
 With some new pretext for admittance.—Back !
 (To GUIBERT)—Sir, he has seen you ! Now cross halberts !
 Ha !—

Pascal is prostrate—there lies Fabian too—
 No passage ! Whither would the madman press ?
 Close the doors quick on me !

Gui. Too late—he's here.

Enter hastily, and with discomposed dress, VALENCE.

Val. Sir Guibert, will you help me ?—Me, that come
 Charged by your townsmen, all who starve at Cleves,
 To represent their heights and depths of woe
 Before our Duchess and obtain relief !
 Such errands barricade such doors, it seems :
 But not a common hindrance drives me back
 On all the sad yet hopeful faces, lit
 With hope for the first time, which sent me forth !
 Cleves, speak for me ! Cleves' men and women, speak—
 Who followed me—your strongest—many a mile
 That I might go the fresher from their ranks,
 —Who sit—your weakest—by the city-gates,
 To take me fuller of what news I bring
 As I return—for I must needs return !
 —Can I ? 'Twere hard, no listener for their wrongs,
 To turn them back upon the old despair—
 Harder, Sir Guibert, than imploring thus—
 So I do—any way you please—implore !
 If you . . . but how should you remember Cleves ?
 Yet they of Cleves remember you so well !
 —Ay, comment on each trait of you they keep,
 Your words and deeds caught up at second hand,—
 Proud, I believe, at bottom of their hearts
 Of the very levity and recklessness
 Which only prove that you forget their wrongs.
 Cleves, the grand town, whose men and women starve,
 Is Cleves forgotten ?—Then remember me !
 You promised me that you would help me once
 For other purpose : will you keep your word ?
Gui. And who may you be, friend ?
Val. Valence of Cleves.
Gui. Valence of . . . not the Advocate of Cleves
 I owed my whole estate to, three years back ?
 Ay, well may you keep silence ! Why, my lords,
 You've heard, I'm sure, how, Pentecost three years,
 I was so nearly ousted of my land
 By some knaves' pretext,—(oh ? when you refused me
 Your ugly daughter, Clugnet,)—and you've heard
 How I recovered it by miracle
 —(When I refused her) ! Here's the very friend,
 —Valence of Cleves, all parties have to thank !
 Nay, Valence, this procedure's vile in you—

I'm no more grateful than a courtier should,
 But politic am I—I bear a brain,
 Can cast about a little, might require
 Your services a second time ! I tried
 To tempt you with advancement here to court
 —“No !”—well, for curiosity at least
 To view our life here—“No !”—our Duchess, then,—
 —A pretty woman's worth some pains to see,
 Nor is she spoiled, I take it, if a crown
 Completes the forehead pale and tresses pure. . .

Val. Our city trusted me its miseries,
 And I am come.

Gui. So much for taste ! But “come,”—
 So may you be, for anything I know,
 To beg the Pope's cross, or Sir Clugnet's daughter,
 And with an equal chance you get all three !
 If it was ever worth your while to come,
 Was not the proper way worth finding too ?

Val. Straight to the palace-portal, sir, I came—

Gui. —And said ?—
Val. —That I had brought the miseries
 Of a whole city to relieve.

Gui. —Which saying
 Won your admittance ? You saw me, indeed,
 And here, no doubt, you stand : as certainly,
 My intervention, I shall not dispute,
 Procures you audience ; which, if I procure,
 That paper's closely written—by Saint Paul,
 Here flock the Wrongs, follow the Remedies
 Chapter and verse, One, Two, A, B., and C.—
 Perhaps you'd enter, make a reverence,
 And launch these “miseries” from first to last ?

Val. How should they let me pause or turn aside ?

Gau. [to VALENCE.] My worthy sir, one question : you 've
 come straight
 From Cleves, you tell us : heard you any talk
 At Cleves about our lady ?

Val. Much.

Gau. And what ?

Val. Her wish was to redress all wrongs she knew.

Gau. That you believed ?

Val. You see me, sir !

Gau. —Nor stopped
 Upon the road from Cleves to Juliers here,
 For any—rumours you might find afloat ?

Val. I had my townsmen's wrongs to busy me.

Gau. This is the Lady's birthday, do you know ?
 —Her day of pleasure ?

Val. —I know that the Great,
For Pleasure born, should still be on the watch
To exclude Pleasure when a Duty offers :
Even as the Lowly too, for Duty born,
May ever snatch a Pleasure if in reach :
Both will have plenty of their birthright, sir !

Gau. [Aside to GUIBERT.] Sir Guibert, here's your man !
No scruples now—

You'll never find his like ! Time presses hard.
I've seen your drift and Adolf's too, this while,
But you can't keep the hour of audience back
Much longer, and at noon the Prince arrives.

[Pointing to VALENCE.] Entrust him with it—fool no chance
away !

Gui. —Him ?

Gau. —With the missive ! What's the man to her ?

Gui. No bad thought !—Yet, 'tis yours—who ever played
The tempting serpent—else, 'twere no bad thought !
I should—and do—mistrust it for your sake,
Or else . . .

Enter an Official, who communicates with ADOLF.

Adolf. The Duchess will receive the Court !

Gui. Give us a moment, Adolf ! Valence, friend,
I'll help you : we of the service, you're to mark,
Have special entry, while the herd . . . the folks
Outside, get access through our help alone

—Well, it is so, was so, and I suppose
So ever will be—your natural lot is, therefore,
To wait your turn and opportunity,
And probably miss both. Now, I engage
To set you, here and in a minute's space
Before the lady with full leave to plead
Chapter and verse, and A, and B, and C,
To heart's content.

Val. I grieve that I must ask,
This being, yourself admit, the custom here,
To what the price of such a favour mounts ?

Gui. Just so ! You're not without a courtier's tact !
Little at court, as your quick instinct prompts,
Do such as we without a recompence.

Val. Yours is ?—

Gui. A trifle : here's a document
'Tis some one's duty to present her Grace—
I say, not mine—these say, not theirs—such points
Have weight at court. Will you relieve us all
And take it ?—Just say, "I am bidden lay
" This paper at the Duchess' feet."

Val.

No more ?

I thank you, sir !

Adolf.

Her Grace receives the Court.

Gui. [Aside.]Now, *sureum corda*, quoth the mass-priest !
Do —

Whoever's my kind saint, do let alone
 These pushings to and fro, and pullings back ;
 Peaceably let me hang o' the devil's arm
 The downward path, if you can't pluck me off
 Completely ! Let me live quite his, or yours !

[The Courtiers begin to range themselves, and move towards the door.

After me, Valence ! So our famous Cleves
 Lacks bread ? Yet don't we gallants buy their lace ?
 And dear enough—it beggars me, I know,
 To keep my very gloves fringed properly !
 This, Valence, is our Great State Hall you cross :
 Yon grey urn's veritable marcasite,
 The Pope's gift ; and those salvers testify
 The Emperor. Presently you'll set your foot
 . . . But you don't speak, friend Valence !

Val.

I shall speak.

Gau. [Aside to GUIBERT.] Guibert—it were no such ungraceful thing

If you and I, at first, seemed horrorstruck
 With the bad news. Look here, what you shall do !
 Suppose you, first, clap hand to sword and cry
 " Yield strangers our allegiance ? First I'll perish
 " Beside your Grace " !—and so give me the cue
 To . . .

Gui. Clap your hand to note-book and jot down
 That to regale the Prince with ? I conceive !
 [To VALENCE.] Do, Valence, speak, or I shall half-suspect
 You're plotting to supplant us, me the first,
 I' the Lady's favour : is 't the grand harangue
 You mean to make, that thus engrosses you ?
 —Which of her virtues you'll apostrophise ?
 Or is 't the fashion you aspire to start,
 Of that close-curled, not unbecoming hair ?
 —Or what else ponder you ?

Val.

My townsmen's wrongs !

ACT II.

Noon. SCENE.—The Presence-chamber.

The DUCHESS and SABYNE.

The D. Announce that I am ready for the Court !

Sab. 'Tis scarcely audience-hour, I think—your Grace
May best consult your own relief, no doubt,
And shun the crowd ; but few can have arrived . . .

The D. Let those not yet arrived, then, keep away !
'Twas me, this day, last year at Ravestein,
You hurried. It has been full time, beside,
This half-hour. Do you hesitate ?

Sab. Forgive me !

The D. Stay, Sabyne ; let me hasten to make sure
Of one true thanker : here with you begins
My audience, claim you first its privilege !
It is my birth's event they celebrate—
You need not wish me more such happy days,
But—ask some favour ! Have you none to ask ?
Has Adolf none, then ? this was far from least
Of much I waited for impatiently,
Assure yourself ! It seemed so natural
Your gift, beside this bunch of river-bells,
Should be the power and leave of doing good
To you, and greater pleasure to myself :
You ask my leave to-day to marry Adolf ?
The rest is my concern.

Sab. Your Grace is ever
Our Lady of dear Ravestein,—but, for Adolf . . .

The D. "But" ? You have not, sure, changed in your
regard
And purpose towards him ?

Sab. We change

The D. Well, then ? Well ?

Sab. How could we two be happy, and, most like,
Leave Juliers, when . . . when . . . but 'tis audience-time !

The D. "When, if you left me, I were left indeed"—
Would you subjoin that ?—Bid the Court approach !
—Why should we play thus with each other, Sabyne ?
Do I not know, if courtiers prove remiss,
If friends detain me, and get blame for it,
There is a cause ? Of last year's throng
Scarce onc-half comes now !

Sab. [Aside.] One-half? No, alas!

The D. So can the mere suspicion of a cloud
Over my fortunes strike each loyal heart.
They've heard of this Prince Berthold; and, forsooth,
Each foolish arrogant pretence he makes,
May grow more foolish and more arrogant,
They please to apprehend! I thank their love!
Admit them!

Sab. [Aside.] How much has she really learned?

The D. Surely, whoever's absent, Tristan waits?
—Or at least Romuald, whom my father raised
From nothing—come, he's faithful to me, come!
(Sabyne, I should but be the prouder—yes,
And fitter to comport myself aright)
Not Romuald? Xavier—what said he to that?
For Xavier hates a parasite, I know! [SABYNE goes out.]

The D. Well, sunshine's everywhere, and summer too;
Next year 'tis the old place again, perhaps—
The water-breeze again, the birds again
. . . It cannot be! It is too late to be!
What part had I, or choice in all of it?
Hither they brought me; I had not to think
Nor care, concern myself with doing good
Or ill, my task was just—to live,—to live,
And, answering ends there was no need explain,
To render Juliers happy—so they said.
All could not have been falsehood! Some was love,
And wonder and obedience—I did all
They looked for! Why then cease to do it now?
Yet this is to be calmly set aside,
And—ere next birthday's dawn, for aught I know,
Things change, a claimant may arrive, and I . . .
It cannot nor it shall not be! His right?
Well, then, he has the right, and I have not.
—But who bade all of you surround my life
And close its growth up with your Ducal crown,
Which, plucked off rudely, leaves me perishing?
I could have been like one of you,—loved, hoped,
Feared, lived and died like one of you—but you
Would take that life away and give me this,
And I will keep this! I will face you—Come!

Enter the Courtiers and VALENCE.

The Courtiers. Many such happy mornings to your Grace!

The D. [Aside, as they pay their devoir.] The same words—
the same faces,—the same love!
I have been over-fearful. These are few—
But these, at least, stand firmly—these are mine!

As many come as may, and if no more,
 'Tis that these few suffice—they do suffice !
 What succour may not next year bring me ! Plainly
 I feared too soon ! [to the Court.] I thank you, sirs : all thanks !

Val. [Aside as the DUCHESS passes from one group to another, conversing.]

'Tis she—the vision this day last year brought,
 When for a golden moment at our Cleves
 She tarried in her progress hither. Cleves
 Chose me to speak its welcome, and I spoke
 —Not that she could have noted the recluse
 —Ungainly, old before his time—who gazed—
 . . . Well, Heaven's gifts are not wasted, and that gaze
 Kept, and shall keep me to the end, her own !
 She was above it—but so would not sink
 My gaze to earth ! The People caught it, hers—
 Thenceforward, mine ; but thus entirely mine,
 Who shall affirm, had she not raised my soul
 Ere she retired and left me—them ?—She turns—
 There's all her wondrous face at once ! The ground
 Reels and . . . [suddenly occupying himself with his paper.]

These wrongs of theirs I have to plead !

The D. [to the Court.] Nay, compliment enough ! And kindness' self

Should pause before it wish me more such years.
 'Twas fortunate that thus, ere youth escaped,
 I tasted life's pure pleasure—one such, pure,
 Is worth a thousand, mixed—and youth's for pleasure :
 Mine is received ; let my age pay for it.

Gau. So, pay, and pleasure paid for, thinks your Grace.
 Should never go together ?

Gui. How, Sir Gaucelme ?
 Hurry one's feast down unenjoyingly
 At the snatched breathing-intervals of work ?
 As good you saved it till the dull day's-end,
 When, stiff and sleepy, appetite is gone !
 Eat first, then work upon the strength of it !

The D. True : you enable me to risk my Future,
 By giving me a Past beyond recall.
 I lived, a girl, one happy leisure year :
 Let me endeavour to be the Duchess now !
 And so,—what news, Sir Guilbert, spoke you of ?

[As they advance a little, and GUIBERT speaks—
 —That gentleman ?

Val. [Aside.] I feel her eyes on me !
 [Gui. to VALENCE.] The Duchess, sir, inclines to hear your
 suit !

Advance ! He is from Cleves.

Val. [coming forward.] [Aside] Their wrongs — their wrongs!

The D. And you, sir, are from Cleves? How fresh in mind, The hour or two I passed at queenly Cleves! She entertained me bravely, but the best Of her good pageant seemed its standers-by, With insuppressive joy on every face! What says my ancient, famous happy Cleves?

Val. Take the truth, lady—*you* are made for truth! So think my friends: nor do they less deserve The having you to take it, you shall think, When you know all—nay, when you only know How, on that day you recollect at Cleves, When the poor acquiescing multitude Who thrust themselves with all their woes apart Into unnoticed corners, that the few Their means sufficed to muster trappings for, Might fill the foreground, occupy your sight With joyous faces fit to bear away And boast of as a sample of all Cleves —How, when to daylight these crept out once more, Clutching, unconscious, each his empty rags Whence the scant coin, which had not half bought bread, That morn he shook forth, counted piece by piece, And, well-advisedly, on perfumes spent them To burn, or flowers to strew, before your path, —How, when the golden flood of music and bliss Ebbed, as their moon retreated, and again Left the sharp black-point rocks of misery bare, —Then I, their friend, had only to suggest “Saw she the horror as she saw the pomp!” — And as one man they cried “He speaks the truth—“Show her the horror! Take from our own mouths “Our wrongs and show them, she will see them too!” —This they cried, lady! I have brought the wrongs.

The D. Wrongs? Cleves has wrongs—apparent now and thus?

I thank you—in that paper?—Give it me!

Val. (There, Cleves!) In this! (What did I promise, Cleves?)

Our weavers, clothiers, spinners, are reduced Since . . . Oh, I crave your pardon—I forgot I buy the privilege of this approach, And promptly would discharge my debt. I lay This paper humbly at the Duchess' feet!

[Presenting GUIBERT's paper.

Gui. Stay—for the present . . .

The D. Stay, sir? I take aught

That teaches me their wrongs with greater pride
Than this your Ducal circlet. Thank you sir !

[*The DUCHESS reads hastily; then, turning to the Courtiers—*
What have I done to you ? Your deed or mine
Was it, this crowning me ? I gave myself
No more a title to your homage, no,
Than church-flowers, born this season, wrote the worps
In the saint's-book that sanctified them first.
For such a flower, you plucked me—well, you erred—
Well, 'twas a weed—remove the eye-sore quick !
But should you not remember it has lain
Steeped in the candles' glory, palely shrined,
Nearer God's Mother than most earthly things ?
—That if 't be faded 'tis with prayer's sole breath—
That the one day it boasted was God's day ?
Still, I do thank you—had you used respect
Here might I dwindle to my last white leaf,
Here lose life's latest freshness, which even yet
May yield some wandering insect rest and food :
So, fling me forth, and—all is best for all !

[*After a pause.] Prince Berthold, who art Juliers' Duke, it seems—*
The King's choice, and the Emperor's, and the Pope's—
Be mine too ! Take this people ! Tell not me
Of rescripts, precedents, authorities,
—But take them, from a heart that yearns to give !
Find out their love,—I could not ; find their fear,—
I would not ; find their like,—I never shall,
Among the flowers ! [*Taking off her coronet.*]

Colombe of Ravestein

Thanks God she is no longer Duchess here !

Val. [*advancing to GUIBERT.] Sir Guibert, — knight they
call you—this of mine*
Is the first step I ever set at court.
You dared make me your instrument, I find ;
For that, so sure as you and I are men,
We reckon to the utmost presently :
But as you are a courtier and I none,
Your knowledge may instruct me. I, already,
Have too far outraged, by my ignorance
Of courtier-ways, this lady, to proceed
A second step and risk addressing her
—I am degraded—you, let me address !
Out of her presence, all is plain enough
What I shall do—but in her presence, too,
Surely there 's something proper to be done !
[*To the others.] You, gentles, tell me if I guess aright—
May I not strike this man to earth ?*

Val. Lady, if your rule
Were based alone on such a ground as these
[Pointing to the COURTIERS.
Could furnish you,—abjure it ! They have hidden
A source of true dominion from your sight.

The D. You hear them—no such source is left . . .

Val. Hear Cleves !

Whose haggard craftsmen rose to starve this day,
Starve now, and will lie down at night to starve,
Sure of a like to-morrow—but as sure
Of a most unlike morrow-after-that,
Since end things must, end howsoe'er things may.
What curbs the brute-force instinct in its hour ?
What makes, instead of rising, all as one,
And teaching fingers, so expert to wield
Their tool, the broadsword's play or carbine's trick,
—What makes that there's an easier help, they think,
For you, whose name so few of them can spell,
Whose face scarce one in every hundred saw,
You simply have to understand their wrongs,
And wrongs will vanish—so, still trades are plied,
And swords lie rusting, and myself stand here ?
There is a vision in the heart of each
Of justice, mercy, wisdom; tenderness
To wrong and pain, and knowledge of its cure—
And these, embodied in a woman's form
That best transmits them, pure as first received,
From God above her, to mankind below.
Will you derive your rule from such a ground,
Or rather hold it by the suffrage, say,
Of this man—this—and this ?

The D. [after a pause.] You come from Cleves—
How many are at Cleves of such a mind ?

Val. [from his paper.] "We, all the manufacturers of
Cleves"—

The D. Or stay, sir—lest I seem too covetous—
Are you my subject ? such as you describe
Am I to you—though to no other man ?

Val. [from his paper.]—"Valence, ordained your Advocate
at Cleves"—

The D. [replacing the coronet.] Then I remain Cleves'
Duchess ! Take you note,
While Cleves but yields one subject of this stamp,
I stand her lady till she waves me off !
For her sake, all the Prince claims I withhold ;
Laugh at each menace ; and, his power defying,
Return his missive with its due contumplt !

[Casting it away.

Gui. [picking it up.]—Which to the Prince I will deliver,
Lady,

[Note it down, Gaucelme]—with your message too!

The D. I think the office is a subject's, sir!

—Either . . . how style you him?—my special guarder
The Marshal's—for who knows but violence
May follow the delivery!—Or, perhaps,
My Chancellor's—for law may be to urge
On its receipt!—Or, even my Chamberlain's—
For I may violate established form!

[To VALENCE.] Sir,—for the half-hour till this service ends,
Will you become all these to me?

Val. [falling on his knee.] My liege!

The D. Give me!

[*The Courtiers present their badges of office.*

[Putting them by,]—Whatever was their virtue once,
They need new consecration! [raising VALENCE.] Are you mine?
—I will be Duchess yet! [She retires.

The Courtiers. Our Duchess yet!

A glorious lady! Worthy love and dread!
I'll stand by her,—and I, whate'er betide!

Gui. [to VALENCE.] Well done, well done, sir! I care not
who knows,

You have done nobly, and I envy you—
Tho' I am but unfairly used, I think:
For when one gets a place like this I hold,
One gets too the remark that its mere wages,
The pay and the preferment, make our prize—
Talk about zeal and faith apart from these,
We're laughed at—much would zeal and faith subsist
Without these also! Yet, let these be stopped,
Our wages discontinue,—then, indeed,
Our zeal and faith, we hear on every side,
Are not released—having been pledged away
I wonder with what zeal and faith in turn?
Hard money purchased me my place! No, no—
I'm right, sir—but your wrong is better still,
If I had time and skill to argue it.
Therefore, I say, I'll serve you, how you please—
If you like,—fight you, as you seem to wish—
(The kinder of me that, in sober truth,
I never dreamed I did you any harm)—

Gau. —Or, kinder still, you'll introduce, no doubt,
His merits to the Prince who's just at hand,
And let no hint drop he's made Chancellor,
And Chamberlain, and Heaven knows what beside!

Clug. [to VALENCE.] You stare, young sir, and threaten!
Let me say,

That at your age, when first I came to court,
I was not much above a gentleman;
While now . . .

Val. —You are Head-Lackey? With your office
I have not yet been graced, sir!

Other Courtiers to Clug. Let him talk!

Fidelity—disinterestedness—
Excuse so much! Men claimed my worship ever
Who, staunch and steadfastly . . .

Enter ADOLF.

Adolf. The Prince arrives!

Courtiers. Ha? How?

Adolf. He leaves his guard a stage behind
At Aix, and enters almost by himself.

1st Court. The Prince! This foolish business puts all out!

2nd Court. Let Gauceline speak first!

3rd Court. Better I began
About the state of Juliers—should one say
All's prosperous and inviting him?

4th Court. [Or rather
All's prostrate and imploring him!]

5th Court. That's best!
Where's the Cleves' paper, by the way?

4th Court. [to VALENCE.] Sir—sir—
If you'll but give that paper—trust it me,
I'll warrant . . .

5th Court. Softly, sir—the Marshal's duty!
Clug. Has not the Chamberlain a hearing first

By virtue of his patent?

Gau. Patents?—Duties?
All that, my masters, must begin again!
One word composes the whole controversy—
We're simply now—the Prince's!

The Others. Ay—the Prince's!

Enter SABYNE.

Sab. Adolf! Bid . . . Oh, no time for ceremony!
Where's whom our lady calls her only subject?
She needs him! Who is here the Duchess's?

Val. [starting from his reverie.] Most gratefully I follow to
her feet!

ACT III.

Afternoon. SCENE.—The Vestibule.

Enter PRINCE BERTHOLD and MELCHIOR.

Berth. A thriving little burgh this Juliers looks.
 [Half-apart.] Keep Juliers, and as good you kept Cologne :
 Better try Aix, though !—

Mel. Please 't your Highness speak ?
Berth. [as before.] Aix, Cologne, Frankfort,—Milan ;—
 Rome !—

Mel. —The Grave.
 —More weary seems your Highness, I remark,
 Than sundry conquerors whose path I 've watched
 Through fire and blood to any prize they gain.
 I could well wish you, for your proper sake,
 Had met some shade of opposition here
 —Found a blunt seneschal refuse unlock,
 Or a scared usher lead your steps astray.
 You must not look for next achievement's palm
 So easy : this will hurt your conquering !

Berth. My next ? Ay—as you say, my next and next !
 Well, I am tired, that's truth, and moody too,
 This quiet entrance-morning ; listen why !
 Our little burgh, now, Juliers—'tis indeed
 One link, however insignificant,
 Of the great chain by which I reach my hope—
 —A link I must secure ; but otherwise,
 You'd wonder I esteem'd it worth my grasp.
 Just see what life is, with its shifts and turns !
 It happens now—this very nook—to be
 A place that once . . . but a short while since, neither—
 When I lived an ambiguous hanger-on
 Of foreign courts, and bore my claims about,
 Discarded by one kinsman, and the other
 A poor priest merely,—then, I say, this place
 Shone my ambition's object ; to be Duke—
 Seemed then what to be Emperor seems now.
 My rights were far from being judged as plain
 In those days as of late, I promise you—
 And 'twas my day-dream, Lady Colombe here
 Might e'en compound the matter, pity me,
 Be struck, say, with my chivalry and grace

(I was a boy !)—bestow her hand at length,
And make me Duke, in her right if not mine.
Here am I, Duke confessed, at Juliers now !
Hearken : if ever I be Emperor,
Remind me what I felt and said to-day !

Mel. All this consoles a bookish man like me !—
—And so will weariness cling to you ! Wrong—
Wrong ! Had you sought the Lady's court yourself—
Faced the redoutables composing it,—
Flattered this, threatened that man, bribed the other,—
Pleaded, by writ and word and deed, your cause,—
Conquered a footing inch by painful inch,—
And, after long years' struggle, pounced at last
On her for prize,—the right life had been lived,
And justice done to divers faculties
Shut in that brow : yourself were visible
As you stood victor, then ! whom now—(your pardon !)
I am forced narrowly to search and see—
. So are you hid by helps—this Pope, your uncle—
Your cousin, the other King ! You are a Mind.—
They, Body : too much of mere legs-and-arms
Obstructs the mind so ! Match these with their like—
Match mind with mind !

Berth. And where's your mind to match ?
They show me legs-and-arms to cope withal !
I'd subjugate this city—where's its mind ?

[*The Courtiers enter slowly.*

Mel. Got out of sight when you came troops and all !
And in its stead, here greets you flesh-and-blood—
A snug œconomy of both, this first !

[*As CLUGNET bows obscurely.*
Well done, gout, all considered !—I may go ?

Berth. Help me receive them !

Mel. Oh, they just will say
What yesterday at Aix their fellows said,—
At Treves, the day before !—Sir Prince, my friend,
Why do you let your life slip thus !—Mean time,
I have my little Juliers to achieve —
The understanding this tough Platonist,
Your holy uncle disinters, Amelius—
Lend me a company of horse and foot,
To help me through his tractate—gain my Duchy !

Berth. And Empire, after that is gained, will be——?

Mel. To help me through your uncle's comment, Prince !

[*Goes.*

Berth. Ah ? Well ! he o'er-refines—the scholar's fault !
How do I let my life slip ? Say, this life,
I lead now, differs from the common life

Of other men in mere degree, not kind,
 Of joys and griefs,—still there is such degree—
 Mere largeness in a life is something, sure,—
 Enough to care about and struggle for,
 In this world : for this world, the Size of things ;
 The Sort of things, for that to come, no doubt !
 A great is better than a little aim—
 And when I wooed Priscilla's rosy mouth
 And failed so, under that grey convent-wall,
 Was I more happy than I should be now

[*By this time, the Courtiers are ranged before him.*
 If failing of my Empire ? Not a whit !
 —Here comes the Mind, it once had tasked me sore
 To baffle, but for my advantages !
 All's best as 'tis—these scholars talk and talk !

[*Seats himself.*

The Courtiers. Welcome our Prince to Juliers!—to his
 Heritage !

Our dutifullest service proffer we !

Clug. I, please your Highness, having exercised
 The function of Grand Chamberlain at Court,
 With much acceptance, as men testify . . .

Berth. I cannot greatly thank you, gentlemen !
 The Pope declares my claim to the Duchy founded
 On strictest justice ; if you concede it, therefore,
 I do not wonder—and the kings my friends
 Protesting they will see such claim enforced,
 You easily may offer to assist us.
 But there 's a slight discretionary power
 To serve me in the matter, you 've had long,
 Though late you use it. This is well to say—
 But could you not have said it months ago ?
 I 'm not denied my own Duke's truncheon, true—
 'Tis flung me—I stoop down, and from the ground
 Pick it, with all you placid standers-by—
 And now I have it, gems and mire at once,
 Grace go with it to my soiled hands, you say !

Gui. (By Paul, the Advocate our doughty friend
 Cuts the best figure !)

Gau. If our ignorance
 May have offended, sure our loyalty . . .

Berth. Loyalty ? Yours ?—Oh—of yourselves you speak !
 —I mean the Duchess all this time, I hope !
 And since I have been forced repeat my claims
 As if they never had been made before,
 As I began, so must I end, it seems.
 The formal answer to the grave demand—
 What says the lady ?

Courtiers. [one to another.] 1st Court. Marshal! 2nd Court.

Orator!

Gui. A variation of our mistress' way!

Wipe off his boots' dust, Clugnet?—that, he waits!

1st Court. Your place!

2nd Court. Just now it was your own!

Gui. The devil's!

Berth. [to GUIBERT.] Come forward, friend—you with the paper there!

Is Juliers the first city I've obtained?

By this time, I may boast proficiency

In each decorum of the circumstance!

Give it me as she gave it—the petition

(Demand, you style it)—what's required, in brief?

What title's reservation, appanage's

Allowance?—I heard all at Treves, last week!

Gau. [to GUIBERT.] "Give it him as she gave it!"

Gui. And why not?

[To BERTHOLD.] The lady crushed your summons thus together,

And bade me, with the very greatest scorn

So fair a frame could hold, inform you . . .

Courtiers.

Stop—

Idiot!

Gui. —Inform you she denied your claim,

Defied yourself! (I tread upon his heel,

The blustering Advocate!)

Berth. By heaven and earth!

Dare you jest, sir?

Gui. Did they at Treves, last week?

Berth. [starting up.] Why then, I look much bolder, than I knew,

And you prove better actors than I thought—

Since, as I live, I took you as you entered

For just so many dearest friends of mine,

Fled from the sinking to the rising power

—The sneaking'st crew, in short, I c'er despised!

Whereas, I am alone here for the moment—

With every soldier left behind at Aix!

Silence? That means the worst—I thought as much!

What follows next then?

Courtiers. Gracious Prince—he raves!

Gui. He asked the truth and why not get the truth?

Berth. Am I a prisoner? Speak, will somebody?

—But why stand paltering with imbeciles?

Let me see her, or . . .

Gui. Her, without her leave,

Shall no one see—she's Duchess yet!

Courtiers. [Footsteps without, as they are disputing.] Good chance !

She's here—the Lady Colombe's self!

Berth.

'Tis well !

[*Aside.*] Array a handful thus against my world ?

Not ill done, truly ! Were not this a mind

To match one's mind with ? Colombe !—Let us wait !

I failed so, under that grey convent-wall !

She comes !

Gui. The Duchess ! Strangers, range yourselves !

[As the DUCHESS enters in conversation with VALENCE, BERTHOLD and the Courtiers fall back a little.]

The D. Presagefully it beats, presagefully,
My heart—the right is Berthold's and not mine !

Val. Grant that he has the right, dare I mistrust
Your power to acquiesce so patiently
As you believe, in such a dream-like change
Of fortune—change abrupt, profound, complete ?

The D. Ah, the first bitterness is over now !
Bitter I may have felt it to confront
The truth, and ascertain those natures' value
I had so counted on—that was a pang—
But I did bear it, and the worst is over :
Let the Prince take them !

Val. —And take Juliers too ?
—Your People without crosses, wands, and chains—
Only with hearts ?

The D. There I feel guilty, sir !
I cannot give up what I never had :
For these I ruled, not them—these stood between.
Shall I confess, sir ? I have heard by stealth
Of Berthold from the first : more news and more ;
Closer and closer swam the thunder-cloud,
But I was safely housed with these, I knew !
At times, when to the casement I would turn,
At a bird's passage, or a flower-trail's play,
I caught the storm's red glimpses on its edge—
Yet I was sure some one of all these friends
Would interpose—I followed the bird's flight,
Or plucked the flower—some one would interpose !

Val. Not one thought on the People—and Cleves there !

The D. So, sadly conscious my real sway was missed,
Its shadow goes without so much regret :
Else could I not again thus calmly bid you,
Answer Prince Berthold !

Val. Then you acquiesce ?

The D. Remember over whom it was I ruled !

Gui. [stepping forward.] Prince Berthold, yonder, craves
an audience, Lady!

The D. [to VALENCE.] I only have to turn, and I shall face
Prince Berthold! Oh, my very heart is sick!
It is the daughter of a line of Dukes,
This scornful insolent adventurer
Will bid depart from my dead father's halls!
I shall not answer him—dispute with him—
But, as he bids, depart! Prevent it, sir!
Sir—but a mere day's respite! Urge for me
—What I shall call to mind I should have urged
When time's gone by—'twill all be mine, you urge!
A day—an hour—that I myself may lay
My rule down! 'Tis too sudden—must not be!
The world's to hear it! Once done—for ever!
How will it read, sir? How be sung about?
Prevent it!

Berth. [approaching.] Your frank indignation, Lady,
Cannot escape me! Overbold I seem—
But somewhat should be pardoned my surprise
At this reception,—this defiance, rather.
And if, for their and your sakes, I rejoice
Your virtues could inspire a trusty few
To make such gallant stand in your behalf,
I cannot but be sorry, for my own,
Your friends should force me to retrace my steps,
Since I no longer am permitted speak
After the pleasant peaceful course prescribed
No less by courtesy than relationship
Which, if you once forgot, I still remember:
But never must attack pass unrepelled.
Suffer, that through you I demand of these,
Who controverts my claim to Juliers?

The D. —Me,
You say, you do not speak to—

Berth. Of your subjects
I ask, then: whom do you accredit? Where
Stand those should answer?

Val. [advancing.] The Lady is alone!
Berth. Alone, and thus? So weak and yet so bold?

Val. I said she was alone—

Berth. —And weak, I said.

Val. When is man strong until he feels alone?

It was some lonely strength at first, be sure,
Created organs, such as those you seek,
By which to give its varied purpose shape—
And, naming the selected ministrants,
Took sword, and shield, and sceptre,—each, a man!

That strength performed its work and passed its way :
You see our Lady : thero, ; the old shapes stand !

—A Marshal, Chamberlain, and Chancellor—

“ Be hlped their way, into their death put life

“ And find advantage ! ”—so you counsel us :

But let strength feel alone, so ek help itsclf,—

And, as the inland-hatched sea -creature hunts

The sea's breast out,—as, litter ed 'nid the waves,

The desert-brute makes for the desert's joy,

So turns our lady to her true resource,

Passing o'er hollow fictions, worn-out types,

—So, I am first her instinct fastens on !

And prompt I say, so clear as heart can speak,

The People will not have you ; nor sha ll have !

It is not merely I shall go bring Cleves

And fight you to the last,—though that does much,

And men and children,—ay, and wome n too,

Fighting for home, are rather to be feared

Than mercenaries fighting for their pay—

But, say you beat us, since such things have been,

And, where this Juliers laughed, you set your foot

Upon a streaming bloody splash—what th en ?

Stand you the more our Lord that there y ou stand ?

Lord it o'er troops whose force you conco ntrate,

A pillared flame whereto all ardours tend —

Lord it 'mid priests whose schemes you amplify,

A cloud of smoke 'neath which all shadows brood—

But never, in this gentle spot of earth,

Can you become our Colombe, our play-queen,

For whom, to furnish lilies for her hair,

We'd pour our veins forth to enrich the soil !

—Our conqueror ? Yes !—O ur despot ? Yes !—Our Duke ?

Know yourself, know us !

Berth. [who has been in thought.] Know your lady, also !

[Very deferentially.]—To whom I needs must exculpato myself

From having made a rash demand, at least.

Wherefore to you, sir, who appear to be

Her chief adviser, I submit my claims, [Giving papers.

But, this step taken, take no further step,

Until the Duchess shall pronounce their worth.

Here be our meeting-pla ce ; at night, its time :

Till then I humbly take the Lady's leave !

He withdraws. As the DUCHESS turns to VALENCE, the Courtiers interc hange glances and come forward a little.

1st Court. So, this was their device !

2nd Court. No bad device !

3rd Court. You'd say they love each other, Guibert's friend

From Cleves, and she, the Duchess !

4th Court. —And moreover,
That all Prince Berthold comes for, is to help
Their loves !

5th Court. Pray, Guibert, what is next to do ?

Gui. [advancing.] I laid my office at the Duchess' foot—
Others. And I—and I—and I !

The D. I took them, sirs !

Gui. [Apart to VALENCE.] And now, sir, I am simple knight
again—

Guibert, of the great ancient house, as yet
That never bore affront : whate'er your birth,—
As things stand now, I recognise yourself
(If you'll accept experience of some date)
As like to be the leading man o' the time,
Therefore as much above me now, as I
Seemed above you this morning. Then, I offered
To fight you : will you be as generous
And now fight me ?

Val. Ask when my life is mine !

Gui. ('Tis hers now !)

Clug. [Apart to VALENCE, as GUIBERT turns from him.]

You, sir, have insulted me .
Grossly,—will grant me, too, the selfsame favour
You've granted him just now, I make no question ?

Val. I promise you, as him, sir !

Clug. Do you so ?

Handsomely said ! I hold you to it, sir !
You'll get me reinstated in my office
As you will Guibert !

The D. I would be alone !

[They begin to retire slowly ; as VALENCE is about to follow—]

Alone, sir—only with my heart,—you stay !

Gua. You hear that ? Ah, light breaks upon me ! Cleves—

It was at Cleves some man harangued us all—

With great effect,—so those who listened said,

My thoughts being busy elsewhere : was this he ?

Guibert,—your strange, disinterested man !

Your uncorrupted, if uncourtly friend !

The modest worth you mean to patronise !

He cares about no Duchesses, not he—

His sole contest is with the wrongs of Cleves !

What, Guibert ? What, it breaks on you at last ?

Gui. Would this hall's floor were a mine's roof !—I'd back
And in her very face . . .

Gau. Apply the match

That fired the train,—and where would you be, pray ?

Gui. With him !

Gau. Stand, rather, safe outside with me !

The mine 's charged—shall I furnish you the match
And place you properly ?—To the ante-chamber !

Gui. Can you ?

Gau. Try me !—Your friend 's in fortune !

Gui. Quick—
To the ante-chamber !—He is pale with bliss !

Gau. No wonder ! Mark her eyes !

Gui. To the ante-chamber !
[The Courtiers retire.

The D. Sir, could you know all you have done for me
You were content ! You spoke, and I am saved !

Val. Be not too sanguine, Lady ! Ere you dream,
That transient flush of generosity
Fades off, perchance ! The man, beside, is gone,—
Whom we might bend ; but see the papers here—
Inalterably his requirement stays,
And cold hard words have we to deal with now.
In that large eye there seemed a latent pride,
To self-denial not incompetent,
But very like to hold itself dispensed
From such a grace—however, let us hope !
He is a noble spirit in noble form !
I wish he less had bent that brow to smile
As with the fancy how he could subject
Himself upon occasion to—himself !
From rudeness, violence, you rest secure !
But do not think your Duchy rescued yet !

The D. You,—who have opened a new world to me,
Will never take the faded language up
Of that I leave ? My Duchy—keeping it,
Or losing it—is that my sole world now ?

Val. Ill have I spoken if you thence despise
Juliers ; although the lowest, on true grounds,
Be worth more than the highest rule, on false :
Aspire to rule, on the true grounds !

The D. Nay, hear—
False, I will never—rash, I would not be !
This is indeed my Birthday—soul and body,
Its hours have done on me the work of years.
You hold the Requisition : ponder it !
If I have right—my duty 's plain : if He—
Say so—nor ever change a tone of voice !
At night you meet the Prince—meet me at eve ;
Till when, farewell ! This discomposes you ?
Believe in your own nature, and its force
Of renovating mine. I take my stand

Only as under me the earth is firm—
 So, prove the first step stable, all will be !
 That first, I choose—[laying her hand on his.]—the next to
 take, choose you ! [She withdraws.

Val. [after a pause.] What drew down this on me ! On
 me—dead once—

She thus bids live,—since all I hitherto
 Thought dead in me, youth's ardours and emprise,
 Burst into life before her, as she bids
 Who needs them !—Whither will this reach, where end ?
 Her hand's print burns on mine . . . Yet she 's above—
 So very far above me ! All 's too plain—
 I served her when the others sank away,
 And she rewards me as such souls reward—
 The changed voice, the suffusion of the cheek,
 The eye's acceptance, the expressive hand—
 —Reward, that 's little, in her generous thought,
 Though all to me . . .

I cannot so disclaim
 Heaven's gift, nor call it other than it is !
 She loves me !

[Looking at the Prince's papers.]—Which love, these, per-
 chance, forbid !
 Can I decide against myself—pronounce
 She is the Duchess and no mate for me ?
 —Cleves, help me ! Teach me,—every haggard face,—
 To sorrow and endure ! I will do right
 Whatever be the issue—help me, Cleves !

ACT IV.

Evening. SCENE.—*An Ante-chamber.*

Enter the Courtiers.

Mau. Now then, that we may speak—how spring this mine ?

Gau. Is Guibert ready for its match ? He cools !

Not so friend Valence with the Duchess there !

“ Stay, Valence—are not you my better self ? ”

And her cheek mantled—

Gui. Well, she loves him, sir—
 And more,—since you will have it I grow cool,—
 She 's right : he 's worth it.

Gau.

For his deeds to-day ?

Say so

Gui. ! What should I say beside ?*Gau.*

Not this—

For friendship's sake leave this for me to say—
 That we're the dupes of an egregious cheat !
 This plain, unpractised suitor, who found way
 To the Duchess thro' the merest die's turn-up—
 A year ago, had seen her and been seen,
 Loved and been loved—

Gui.

Impossible !

Gau.

—Nor say,

How sly and exquisite a trick, moreover,
 Was this which—taking not their stand on facts
 Boldly, for that had been endurable,
 But, worming in their way by craft, they choose
 Resort to, rather,—and which you and we,
 Sheep-like, assist them in the playing off !
 The Duchess thus parades him as preferred,
 Not on the honest ground of preference,
 Seeing first, liking more, and there an end—
 But as we all had started equally,
 And at the close of a fair race he proved
 The only valiant, sage, and loyal man.
 And she, too, with the pretty fits and starts,—
 The careless, winning, candid ignorance
 Of what the Prince might challenge or forego—
 She had a hero in reserve ! What risk
 Ran she ? This deferential easy Prince
 Who brings his claims for her to ratify
 —He's just her puppet for the nonce ! You'll see,—
 Valence pronounces, as is equitable,
 Against him : off goes the confederate :
 As equitably, Valence takes her hand !

The Chancellor. You run too fast—her hand, no subject
 takes !

Do not our Archives hold her father's Will ?
 That will provides against such accident,
 And gives next heir, Prince Berthold, the reversion
 Of Juliers, which she forfeits, wedding so.

Gau. I know that, well as you,—but does the Prince ?
 Knows Berthold, think you, that this plan he helps
 For Valence's ennoblement,—would end,
 If crowned with the success which seems its due,
 In making him the very thing he plays,
 The actual Duke of Juliers ? All agree
 That Colombe's title waived or set aside,
 He is next heir.

The Chan. Incontrovertibly !

Gau. Guibert, your match, now, to the train !

Gui. Enough !

I'm with you—selfishness is best again !

I thought of turning honest—what a dream !

Let's wake now !

Gau. Selfish, friend, you never were—

'Twas but a series of revenges taken

On your unselfishness for prospering ill.

But now that you're grown wiser, what's our course ?

Gui. —Wait, I suppose, till Valance weds our Lady,
And then, if we must needs revenge ourselves,
Apprise the Prince—

Gau. —The Prince, ere then dismissed
With thanks for playing his mock part so well ?
Tell the Prince now, sir ! Ay, this very night—
Ere he accepts his dole and goes his way,
Explain how such a marriage makes him Duke,
Then trust his gratitude for the surprise !

Gui. —Our Lady wedding Valence all the same
As if the penalty were undisclosed !
Good ! If she loves, she'll not disown her love,
Throw Valence up—I wonder you see that !

Gau. The shame of it—the suddenness and shame !
Within her, the inclining heart—without,
A terrible array of witnesses—
With Valence by, to keep her to her word,
And Berthold's indignation or disgust—
We'll try it !—Not that we can venture much :
Her confidence we've lost for ever—Berthold's
Is all to gain !

Gui. To-night, then, venture we !
Yet—if lost confidence might be renewed ?

Gau. Never in noble natures ! With the base ones,—
Twist off the crab's claw, wait a smarting-while,
And something grows and grows and gets to be
A mimic of the lost joint, just so like
As keeps in mind it never, never will
Replace its predecessor ! Crabs do that :
But lop the Lion's foot—and

Gui. To the Prince !

Gau. [Aside.] And come what will to the lion's foot, I pay
you
My cat's-paw, as I long have yearned to pay !
[Aloud.] Footsteps . . . Himself ! 'Tis Valance breaks on us !
Exulting that their scheme succeeds !—We'll hence—
And perfect ours ! Consult the Archives, first—
Then, fortified with knowledge, seek the Hall !

Clug. [to GAUCELME as they retire.] You have not smiled so since your father died !

As they retire, enter VALENCE with papers.

Val. So must it be ! I have examined these With scarce a palpitating heart—so calm, Keeping her image almost wholly off, Setting upon myself determined watch, Repelling to the uttermost his claims, And the result is . . . all men would pronounce And not I, only, the result to be— Berthold is Heir ; she has no shade of right To the distinction which divided us, But, suffered to rule first I know not why, Her rule connived at by those Kings and Popes, To serve some devil's-purpose,—now 'tis gained, Whate'er it was, the rule expires as well. —Valence, this rapture . . . selfish can it be ? Eject it from your heart, her home !—It stays . Ah, the brave world that opens on us both ! . . . Do my poor townsmen so esteem it ? Cleves,— I need not your pale faces ! This, reward For service done to you ? Too horrible ! I never served you—'twas myself I served ! Nay—served not—rather saved from punishment Which, had I failed you then, would plague me now ! My life continues yours, and your life mine— But if, to take God's gift, I swerve no step— Cleves !—if I breathe no prayer for it—if she, [Footsteps without.] Colombe, that comes now, freely gives herself— Will Cleves require, that, turning thus to her, I . . .

Enter PRINCE BERTHOLD.

—Pardon, sir—I did not look for you Till night, in the Hall ; nor have as yet declared My judgment to the Lady !

Berth. So I hoped.

Val. And yet I scarcely know why that should check The frank disclosure of it first to you— What her right seems, and what, in consequence, She will decide on—

Berth. That I need not ask.

Val. You need not : I have proved the Lady's mind— And, justice being to do, dare act for her.

Berth. Doubtless she has a very noble mind !

Val. Oh, never fear but she'll in each conjuncture Bear herself bravely ; she no whit depends

On circumstance ; as she adorns a throne,
She had adorned . . .

Berth. . . . A cottage—in what book
Have I read that of every queen that, lived ?
A throne ? You have not been instructed, sure,
To forestall my request ?

Val. 'Tis granted, sir—
My heart instructs me. I have scrutinized
Your claims . . .

Berth. Ah—claims, you mean, at first preferred !
I come, before the hour appointed me,
To pray you let those claims at present rest—
In favour of a new and stronger one.

Val. You shall not need a stronger : on the part
Of the lady, all you offer I accept,
Since one clear right suffices : yours is clear.
Propose !

Berth. I offer you my hand.

Val. Your hand ?

Berth. A Duke's, yourself say ; and, at no far time,
Something here whispers me—the Emperor's.
The Lady's mind is noble ; which induced
This seizure of occasion ere my claims
Were—settled, let us amicably say !

Val. Your hand ?

Berth. (He will fall down and kiss it next !)
Sir, this astonishment's too flattering—
Nor must you hold your mistress' worth so cheap !
Enhance it, rather,—urge that blood is blood—
The daughter of the Burgraves, Landgraves, Markgraves,
Remains their daughter ; I shall scarce gainsay !
Elsewhere or here, the Lady needs must rule :
Like the Imperial crown's great chrysoprase,
They talk of—somewhat out of keeping therè,
And yet no jewel for a meanner cap !

Val. You wed the Duchess ?

Berth. Cry you mercy, friend !
Will the match influence many fortunes here ?
A natural solicitude enough !
Be certain, no bad chance it provos for you !
However high you take your present stand,
There's prospect of a higher still remove—
For Juliers will not be my resting-place, .
And, when I have to choose a substitute
To rule the little burgh, I'll think of you.
You need not give your mates a character !
And yet I doubt your fitness to supplant
The grey smooth Chamberlain—he 'd hesitate

A doubt his lady could demean herself
So low as to accept me. Courage, sir!
I like your method better—feeling's play
Is franker much, and flatters me beside.

Val. I am to say, you love her?

Berth. Say that too!

Love has no great concernment, thinks the world,
With a Duke's marriage—How go precedents
In Juliers' story—how use Juliers' Dukes?
I see you have them here in goodly row;
You must be Luitpold,—(ay, a stalwart sire!)
—Say, I have been arrested suddenly
In my ambition's course, its rocky course,
By this sweet flower—I fain would gather it
And then proceed—so say and speedily—
—(Nor stand there like Duke Luitpold's brazen self!)
Enough, sir: you possess my mind, I think.
This is my claim, the others being withdrawn,
And to this, be it that, in the Hall to-night,
Your Lady's answer comes; till when, farewell!

[He retires.]

Val. [after a pause.] The heavens and earth stay as they
were—my heart
Beats as it beat—the truth remains the truth!
What falls away, then, if not faith in her?
Was it my faith, that she could estimate
Love's value,—and, such faith still guiding me,
Dare I now test her?—or grew faith so strong
Solely because no power of test was mine?

Enter the DUCHESS.

The D. My fate, sir! Ah, you turn away—all's over!
But you are sorry for me—be not so!
What I might have become, and never was,
Regret with me; what I have merely been,
Rejoice I am no longer; what I seem
Beginning now, in my new state, to be,
Hope that I am,—for, once my rights proved void,
This heavy roof seems easy to exchange
For the blue sky outside—my lot henceforth!

Val. And what a lot is Berthold's!

The D. How of him?

Val. He gathers earth's whole good into his arms,
Standing, as man, now, stately, strong and wise—
Marching to Fortune, not surprised by her:
One great aim, like a guiding-star, above—
Which tasks strength, wisdom, stateliness, to lift
His manhood to the height that takes the prize;

A prize not near—lest overlooking earth
 He rashly spring to seize it—nor remote,
 So that he rests upon his path content :
 But day by day, while shimmerring grows shine,
 And the faint circlet prophesies the orb,
 He sees so much as, just evolving these,
 The stateliness, the wisdom and the strength,
 To due completion, will suffice this life,
 And lead him at his grandest to the grav
 After this star, out of a night he springs ;
 A beggar's cradle for the throne of thrones
 He quits, so, mounting, feels each step he mounts,
 Nor, as from each to each exultingly
 He passes, overleaps one grade of joy.
 This, for his own good :—with the world, each gift
 Of God and man,—Reality, Tradition,
 Fancy and Fact—so well environ him,
 That as a mystic panoply they serve—
 Of force, untenanted, to awe mankind,
 And work his purpose out with half the world
 While he, their master, dexterously slipt
 From such encumbrance, is meantime employed
 With his own prowess on the other half.
 Thus shall he prosper, every day's success
 Adding, to what is He, a solid strength—
 An airy might to what encircles him,
 Till at the last, so life's routine lends help,
 That as the Emperor only breathes and moves,
 His shadow shall be watched, his step or stalk
 Become a comfort or a portent ; how
 He trails his ermine take significance,—
 Till even his power shall cease to be most power,
 And men shall dread his weakness more, nor dare
 Peril their earth its bravest, first and best,
 Its typified invincibility.
 So shall he go on, greatening, till he ends
 The man of men, the spirit of all flesh,
 The fiery centre of an earthy world !

The D. Some such a fortune I had dreamed should rise
 Out of my own—that is, above my power
 Seemed other, greater potencies to stretch—

Val. For you ?

The D. It was not I moved there, I think :
 But one I could,—though constantly beside,
 And aye approaching,—still keep distant from,
 And so adore. 'Twas a man moved there !

Val.

Who?

The D. I felt the spirit, never saw the face :

Val. See it ! 'Tis Berthold's ! He enables you
To realise your vision !

The D. Berthold ?

Val. Duke—
Emperor to be : he proffers you his hand.

The D. Generous and princely !

Val. He is all of this.

The D. Thanks, Berthold, for my father's sake—no hand
Degrades me !

Val. You accept the proffered hand ?

The D. That he should love me !

Val. "I loved" I did not say !
Had that been—love might so incline the Prince
To the world's good, the world that's at his foot,—
I do not know, this moment, I should dare
Desire that you refused the world—and Cleves—
The sacrifice he asks !

The D. Not love me, sir ?

Val. He scarce affirmed it.

The D. May not deeds affirm ?

Val. What does he ? . . . Yes—yes—very much he does !
All the shame saved, he thinks, and sorrow saved—
Inmitigable sorrow, so he thinks,—
Sorrow that's deeper than we dream, perchance !

The D. Is not this love ?

Val. So very much he does !
For look, you can descend now gracefully—
All doubts are banished, that the world might have,
Or worst, the doubts yourself, in after-time.
May call up of your heart's sincereness now :
To such, reply, "I could have kept my rule—
"Increased it to the utmost of my dreams—
"Yet I abjured it !" This he does for you :
It is munificently much !

The D. Still "much" !

But why is it not love, sir ? Answer me !

Val. Because not one of Berthold's words and looks
Had gone with love's presentiment of a flower
To the beloved : because bold confidence,
Open superiority, free pride—
Love owns not, yet were all that Berthold owned :
Because where reason, even, finds no flaw
Unerringly a lover's instinct may

The D. You reason, then, and doubt ?

Val. I love, and know.

The D. You love ?—How strange ! I never cast a thought
On that ! Just see our selfishness—you seemed
So much my own . . . I had no ground—and yet,

I never dreamed another might divide
My power with you, much less exceed it !

Val.

Lady,

I am yours wholly !

The D.

Oh, no, no, not mine !

Tis not the same now, never more can be !

—Your first love, doubtless ! Well, what's gone from me ?
What have I lost in you ?

Val.

My heart replies—

No loss there ! . . . So to Berthold back again !

This offer of his hand, he bids me make—

Its obvious magnitude is well to weigh !

The D. She's . . . yes, she must be very fair for you !

Val. I am a simple Advocate of Cleves.

The D. You ! With the heart and brain that so helped me,
I fancied them exclusively my own,

Yet find are subject to a stronger sway !

She must be . . . tell me, is she very fair ?

Val. Most fair, beyond conception or belief !

The D. Black eyes ?—no matter ! Colombe, the world
lends

Its life without you, whom your friends professed

The only woman—see how true they spoke !

One lived this while, who never saw your face,

Nor heard your voice—unless . . . Is she from Cleves ?

Val. Cleves knows her well !

The D. Ah—just a fancy, now !

When you poured forth the wrongs of Cleves,—I said,

—Thought, that is, afterward . . .

Val. You thought of me ?

The D. Of what else ? Only such great cause, I thought,

For such effect—see what true love can do !

Cleves is his love !—I almost fear to ask

. . . Nor will not ! This is idling—to our work !

Admit before the Prince, without reserve,

My claims misgrounded; then may follow better

. . . When you poured out Cleves' wrongs impetuously,

Was she in your mind ?

Val. All done was done for her—

—To humble me !

The D. She will be proud at least !

Val. She ?

The D. When you tell her !

Val. That will never be !

The D. How—are there sweeter things you hope to tell ?

No, sir ! You counselled me,—I counsel you

In the one point I—any woman—can !

Your worth, the first thing ; let her own come next—

Say what you did through her, and she through you—
The praises of her beauty afterward !

Will you ?

Val. I dare not !

The D. Dare not ?

Val. She I love

Suspects not such a love in me.

The D. You jest !

Val. The lady is above me and away !

Not only the brave form, and the bright mind,
And the great heart, combine to press me low—
But all the world calls rank divides us.

The D. Rank ?

Now grant me patience ! Here 's a man declares
Oracularly in another's case—
Sees the true value and the false, for them—
Nay, bids them see it, and they straight do see !
You called my court's love worthless—so it turned :
I threw away as dross my heap of wealth,
And here you stickle for a piece or two !
First—has she seen you ?

Val. Yes !

The D. She loves you, then.

Val. One flash of hope burst—then succeeded night—
And all 's at darkest now, Impossible !

The D. We 'll try : you are—so to speak—my subject
yet ?

Val. As ever—to the death !

The D. Obey me, then !

Val. I must !

The D. Approach her, and . . . No ! First of all
Get more assurance ; " my instructress," say,
" Was great, descended from a line of kings,
" And even fair"—(wait why I say this folly)—
" She said, of all men, none for eloquence,
" Courage, and (what cast even these to shade)
" The heart they sprung from,—none deserved like him
" Who saved her at her need—if she said this,
" What should not one I love say ? "

Val. Heaven—this hope—

Oh, lady, you are filling me with fire !

The D. Say this !—nor think I bid you cast aside
One touch of all that awe and reverence !
Nay—make her proud for once to heart's content
That all this wealth of heart and soul 's her own !
Think you are all of this,—and, thinking it,

. . . [Obey !)

Val. I cannot choose !

The D.

Then kneel to her !

[*VALENCE sinks on his knee.*

I dream !

Val. Have mercy ! Yours, unto the death,—
I have obeyed. Despise, and let me die.

The D. Alas ! sir, is it to be ever thus ?

Even with you as with the world ? I know
This morning's service was no vulgar deed
Whose motive, once it dares avow itself,
Explains all done and infinitely more,
So takes the shelter of a nobler cause.

Your service named its true source,—loyalty !
The rest 's unsaid again. The Duchess bids you.
Rise, sir ! The Prince's words were in debate.

Val. [rising.] Rise ! Truth, as ever, Lady, comes from you !

[I should rise—I that spoke for Cleves, can speak
For Man—yet tremble now, that stood firm then !
[I laughed—for 'twas past tears—that Cleves should starve
With all hearts beating loud the infamy,

And no tongue daring trust as much to air !

Yet here, where all hearts speak, shall I be mute ?

Oh lady, for your own sake look on me !

On all I am, and have, and do—heart, brain,
Body and soul,—this Valence and his gifts !

I was proud once—I saw you—and they sank,
So that each magnified a thousand times

Were nothing to you—but such nothingness
Would a crown gild it, or a sceptre prop,

A treasure speed, a laurel wreath enhance ?

What is my own desert ? But should your love
Have . . . there 's no language helps here . . . singled me,—
Then—Oh, that wild word “then !”—be just to love,
In generosity its attribute !

Love, since you pleased to love ! All 's cleared—a stage
For trial of the question kept so long

For you—Is Love or Vanity the best ?

You, solve it for the world's sake—you, speak first
What all will shout one day—you, vindicate

Our earth and be its angel ! All is said.

Lady, I offer nothing—I am yours,
But for the cause, sake, look on me and him

And speak !

The D. I have received the Prince's message :
Say, I prepare my answer !

Val.

Tako me, Cleves !

[*He withdraws.*

The D. Mournful—that nothing 's what it calls itself !
Devotion, zeal, faith, loyalty—mere love !

And, love in question, what may Berthold's be ?
 I did ill to mistrust the world so soon—
 Already was this Berthold at my side !
 The valley-level has its hawks, no doubt :
 May not the rock-top have its eagles too ?
 Yet Valence . . . let me see his Rival then !

ACT V.

Night. SCENE.—The Hall.

Enter BERTHOLD and MELCHIOR.

Mel. And here you wait the matter's issue ?

Berth.

Here.

Mel. I don't regret I shut Amelius, then !
 But tell me, on this grand disclosure,—how
 Behaved our spokesman with the forehead ?

Berth.

Oh,

Turned out no better than the foreheadless—
 Was dazzled not so very soon—that's all !
 For my part, this is scarce the hasty, showy,
 Chivalrous measure you give me credit of !
 Perhaps I had the fancy,—but 'tis gone—
 —Let her commence the unfriended innocent,
 And carry wrongs about from court to court ?
 No, truly ! The least shake of Fortune's sand,
 —My uncle-Pope chokes in a coughing fit,
 King Philip takes a fancy to blue eyes,—
 And wondrously her claims would brighten up !
 Forth comes a new gloss on the ancient law,
 O'er-looked provisoës, past o'er premises,
 Follow in plenty—No—'tis the safer step.
 The hour beneath the convent-wall is lost—
 Juliers and she, once mine, are ever mine.

Mel. Which is to say, you, losing heart already,
 Elude the adventure !

Berth.

Not so—or, if so—

Why not confess at once, that I advise
 None of our kingly craft and guild just now
 To lay, one moment, down their privilege
 With the notion they can any time at pleasure
 Retake it—that may turn out hazardous !
 We seem, in Europe, pretty well at end
 O' the night, with our great masque : those favoured few

Who keep the chamber's top, and honour's chance
 Of the early evening, may retain their place
 And figure as they list till out of breath.
 But it is growing late ; and I observe
 A dim grim kind of tipstaves at the doorway
 Not only bar new-comers entering now,
 But caution those who left, for any cause,
 And would return, that inorning draws too near ;
 The ball must die off, shut itself up. We—
 I think, may dance lights out and sunshine in,
 And sleep off headache on our frippery—
 But friend the other, who cunningly stole out,
 And, after breathing the fresh air outside,
 Means to re-enter with a new costume,
 Will be advised go back to bed, I fear.
 I stick to privilege, on second thoughts !

Mel. Yes—you evade the adventure !—And, beside,
 Give yourself out for colder than you are.
 —King Philip, only, notes the lady's eyes ?
 Don't they come in for somewhat of the motive
 With you too ?

Berth. Yes—no : I am past that now !
 Gone 'tis—I cannot shut my eyes to fact.
 Of course, I might by forethought and contrivance
 Reason myself into a rapture. Gone !
 And something better's come instead, no doubt.

Mel. So be it ! Yet, all the same, proceed my way
 Though to your end ; so shall you prosper best.
 The lady,—to be won for selfish ends,—
 Will be won easier my unselfish . . . call it,
 Romantic way.

Berth. Won easier ?

Mel. Will not she ?

Berth. There I profess humility without bound !
 Ill cannot speed—not I—the Emperor !

Mel. And I should think the Emperor best waived,
 From your description of her mood and way !
 You could look, if it pleased you, into hearts ;
 But are too indolent and fond of watching
 Your own—you know that, for you study it !

Berth. Had you but seen the orator her friend,
 So bold and voluble an hour before,
 Abashed to earth at aspect of the change !
 Make her an Empress ? Ah, that changed the case !
 . . . Oh, I read hearts ! And for my own behoof,
 I court her with my true worth—see the event !
 I learned my final lesson on that head
 When years ago,—my first and last essay !

Before my uncle could obtain the ear
 Of his superior, help me from the dirt—
 Priscilla left me for a Brabant Duke
 Whose cheek was like the topaz on his thumb.
 I am past illusion on that score.

Mel. Here comes
 The lady—
Berth. —And there you go! But do not! Give me
 Another chance to please you. Hear me plead!
Mel. You'll keep, then, to the lover, to the man?

Enter the DUCHESS—followed by ADOLF and SABYNE, and, after an interval, by the Courtiers.

Berth. Good auspice to our meeting!
The D. May it prove!
 —And you, sir, will be Emperor one day?
Berth. (Ay--that's the point!) I may be Emperor.
The D. "Tis not for my sake only, I am proud
 Of this you offer; I am prouder far
 That from the highest state should duly spring
 The highest, since most generous, of deeds.
Berth. (Generous--still that!) You underrate yourself.
 You are, what I, to be complete, must have—
 Find now, and may not find, another time.
 While I career on all the world for stage,
 There needs at home my representative—

The D. —Such, rather, would some warrior-woman be—
 One dowered with lands and gold, or rich in friends—
 One like yourself!

Berth. Lady, I am myself,
 And have all these: I want what's not myself,
 Nor has all these. Why give one hand two swords?
 Here's one already: be a friend's next gift
 A silk glove, if you will—I have a sword!

The D. You love me, then?
Berth. Your lineage I revere—
 Honour your virtue, in your truth believe,
 Do homage to your intellect, and bow
 Before your peerless beauty.

The D. But, for love—
Berth. A further love I do not understand.
 Our best course is to say these hideous truths,
 And see them, once said, grow endurable.
 Like waters shuddering from their central bed,
 Black with the midnight bowels of the earth,
 That, once up-spouted by an earthquake's throe,
 A portent and a terror—soon subside,
 Freshen apace, take gold and rainbow hues

In sunshine, sleep in shadow,—and, at last,
Grow common to the earth as hills or trees—
Accepted by all things they came to scare.

The D. You cannot love, then ?

Berth. —Charlemagne, perhaps !

Are you not over-curious in love-lore ?

The D. I have become so, very recently.

It seems, then, I shall best deserve esteem,
Respect, and all your candour promises,
By putting on a calculating mood—

Asking the terms of my becoming yours ?

Berth. Let me not do myself injustice, neither !

Because I will not condescend to fictions

That promise what my soul can ne'er acquit.

It does not follow that my guarded phrase

May not include far more of what you seek,

Than wide professions of less scrupulous men.

You will be Empress, once for all—with me

The Pope disputes supremacy—you stand

And none gainsays, the Earth's first woman !

The D. That—

Or simple Lady of Ravestein again ?

Berth. The matter's not in my arbitrement !

Now I have made my claims—which I regret—

Cede one, cede all !

The D. This claim, then, you enforce ?

Berth. The world looks on.

The D. And when must I decide ?

Berth. "When," Lady ? Have I said thus much so promptly

For nothing ? I poured out, with such pains, at once

What I might else have suffered to ooze forth

Droplet by droplet in a life-time long,

For aught less than as prompt an answer too ?

All's fairly told now—who can teach you more ?

The D. I do not see him !

Berth. I shall ne'er deceive !

This offer had been made befittingly

Would time allow the better setting forth

The good of it, with what is not so good,

Advantage, and disparagement as well—

But as it is, the sum of both must serve.

I am already weary of this place—

My thoughts are next stage on to Rome. Decide !

The Empire—or,—not even Juliers now !

Hail to the Empress—farewell to the Duchess !

[The Courtiers, who have been drawing nearer and nearer,
interpose.]

Courtiers. . . . "Farewell," Prince? when we break in at
our risk—

Clug. (Almost upon Court-licence trespassing) . . .

Courtiers. —To point out how your claims are valid
yet!

You know not, by the Duke her Father's will,
The lady, if she weds beneath her rank,
Forfeits her Duchy in the next heir's favour—
So 'tis expressly stipulate. And if
It can be shown 'tis her intent to wed
A subject, then yourself, next heir, by right
Succeed to Juliers.

Berth. What insanity! . . .

Gui. Sir, there's one Valence—the dale, fiery man
You saw and heard, this morning—thought, no doubt,
Was of considerable standing here—
I put it to your penetration, Prince,
If aught save love, the truest love for her,
Had made him serve the lady as he did!
He's simply a poor advocate of Cleves
—Creeps here with difficulty, finds a place
With danger, gets in by a miracle,
And for the first time meets the Lady's face—
So runs the story—is that credible?
For, first—no sooner in than he's apprised
Fortunes have changed; you are all-powerful here,
The Lady as powerless: he stands fast by her!

The D. [Aside.] (And do such deeds spring up from love
alone?)

Gui. But here occurs the question, does the Lady
Love him again? I say, How else can she?
Can she forget how he stood singly forth
In her defence, dared outrage all of us,
Insult yourself—for what save love's reward?

The D. (And is love, then, the sole reward of love?)

Gui. But, love him as she may and must—you ask,
Means she to wed him? "Yes," both natures answer!
Both, in their pride, point out the sole result—
Nought less would he accept nor she propose!
For each conjuncture was she great enough—
—Will be, for this!

Clug. Though, now that this is known,
Policy, doubtless, urges she deny . . .

The D. —What, sir, and wherefore?—since I am not
sure
That all is any other than you say?
You take this Valence, hold him close to me,
Him with his actions: can I choose but look?

I am not sure, love trulier shows itself
 Than in this man, you hate and would degrade,
 Yet, with your worst abatement, show me thus :
 Nor am I—(thus made look within myself,
 Ere I had dared,)—now that the look is dared—
 Sure that I do not love him !

Guil. Hear you, Prince ?

Berth. And what, sirs, please you, may this prattle mean ?
 —Unless to prove with what alacrity
 You give your Lady's secrets to the world—
 —How much indebted, for discovering
 That quality, you make me, will be found
 When next a keeper for my own 's to seek !

Courtiers. "Our Lady?"

Berth. —She assuredly remains !
The D. Ah, Prince—and you too can be generous ?
 You could renounce your power, if this were so,
 And let me, as these phrase it, wed my love
 Yet keep my Duchy ? You perhaps exceed
 Him even in disinterestedness !

Berth. How, Lady, should all this affect my purpose ?
 Your will and choice are still, as ever, free !
 Say, you have known a worthier than myself
 In mind and heart, of happier form and face ;
 Others must have their birthright ! I have gifts
 To balance theirs, not blot them out of sight !
 Against a hundred other qualities,
 I lay the prize I offer. I am nothing—
 Wed you the Empire ?

The D. And my heart away ?

Berth. When have I made pretension to your heart ?
 I give none. I shall keep your honour safe—
 With mine I trust you, as the sculptor trusts
 You marble woman with the marble rose,
 Loose on her hand, she never will let fall,
 In graceful, slight, silent security.
 You will be proud of my world-wide career,
 And I content in you the fair and good.
 What were the use of planting a few seeds,
 The thankless climate never would mature—
 Affections all repelled by circumstance ?
 Enough : to these no credit I attach, -
 To what you own, find nothing to object.
 Write simply on my Requisition's face
 What shall content my friends—that you admit,
 As Colombe of Bavestein, the claims therein,
 Or never need admit them as my wife—
 And either way, all's ended.

The D.

Let all end !

Berth. The Requisition !*Courtiers.*

--Valence holds, of course !

Berth. Desire his presence !

[ADOLF goes out]

Courtiers. [to each other.] Out it all comes yet !

He'll have his word against the bargain still !

He's not the man to tamely acquiesce !

One passionate appeal—upbraiding even,

Might turn the tide again ! Despair not yet !

[They retire a little.]

Berth. [to MELCHIOR.] The Empire has its old success, my friend !*Mel.* You've had your way : before the spokesman comes, Let me, but this once, work a problem out, And ever more be dumb ! The Empire wins ? To better purpose I have read my books !*Enter VALENCE.**Mel.* to the *Courtiers.*] Apart, my masters !

[To VALENCE.] Sir, one word with you !

I am a poor dependent of the Prince's—

Pitched on to speak, as of slight consequence :

You are no higher, I find—in other words,

We two, as probably the wisest hero,

Need not hold diplomatic talk like fools :

Suppose I speak, divesting the plain fact

Of all their tortuous phrases, fit for them—

Do you reply so, and what trouble's saved !

The Prince, then—an embroiled strange heap of news

This moment reaches him—if true or false,

All dignity forbids he should enquire

In person, or by worthier deputy ;

Yet somehow must enquire, lest slander come :

And so 'tis I am pitched on. You have heard

His offer to your Lady ?

Val. Yes.*Mel.* —Conceive

Her joy thereat ?—

Val. I cannot.*Mel.* No one can :

All draws to a conclusion, therefore.

Val. [Aside.] So !

No after-judgment—no first thought revised—

Her first and last decision !—me, she leaves—

Takes him—a simple heart is flung aside,

The ermine o'er a heartless breast embraced !

Oh Heaven, this mockery has been played too oft !

Once, to surprise the angels—twice, that fiends

Recording, might be proud they chose not so—
 Thrice, many thousand times, to teach the world
 All men should pause, misdoubt their strength, since men
 Could have such chance yet fail so signally,
 —But ever—ever—this farewell to heaven,
 Welcome to earth—this taking death for life—
 This spurning love and kneeling to the world—
 Oh Heaven, it is too often and too old!

Mel. Well, on this point—what but an absurd rumour
 Arises—these, its source—its subject, you!
 Your faith and loyalty misconstruing,
 They say, your service claims the lady's hand!
 Of course, nor Prince nor Lady can respond—
 Yet something must be said—for, were it true
 You made such claim, the Prince would . . .

Val. Well, sir, would?

Mel. —Not only probably withdraw his suit,
 But, very like, the lady might be forced
 Accept your own.—Oh, there are reasons why!
 But you'll excuse at present all save this,—
 I think so. What we want is, your own witness,
 For, or against—her good, or yours: decide!

Val. [Aside.] Be it her good if she accounts it so!
 [After a contest.] For what am I but hers, to choose as she?
 Who knows how far, beside, the light from her
 May reach, and dwell with, what she looks upon?

Mel. [to the Prince.] Now to him, you!

Berth. [to VALENCE.] My friend acquaints you, sir,
 The noise runs . . .

Val. . . . Prince, how fortunate are you,
 Wedding her as you will, in spite of it,
 To show belief in love! Let her but love you,
 All else you disregard! What else can be?
 You know how love is incompatible
 With falsehood—purifies, assimilates
 All other passions to itself.

Mel. Ay, sir;
 But softly! Where, in the object we select,
 Such love is, perchance, wanting?

Val. Then, indeed,
 What is it you can take?

Mel. Nay—ask the world!
 Youth, beauty, virtue, an illustrious name,
 An influenço o'er mankind!

Val. When man perceives . . .
 —Ah, I can only speak as for myself!

The D. Speak for yourself!

Val. May I?—no, I have spoken,

And time's gone by!—Had I seen such an one—
As I loved her—weighing thoroughly that word—
So should my task be to evolve her love—
If for myself!—if for another—well!

Berth. Heroic truly! And your sole reward,—
The secret pride in yielding up your own?

Val. Who thought upon reward? And yet how much
Comes after—Oh what amplest recompence!
Is the knowledge of her, nought? the memory, nought?
—Lady, should such an one have looked on you,
Ne'er wrong yourself so far as quote the world,
And say, love can go unrequited here!
You will have blessed him to his whole life's end—
Low passions hindered, baser cares kept back,
All goodness cherished where you dwelt—and dwell.
What would he have? He holds you—you, both form
And mind, in his,—where self-love makes such room
For love of you, he would not serve you now
The vulgar way,—repulse your enemies,
Win you new realms, or best, in saving you
Die blissfully—that's past so long ago!
He wishes you no need, thought, care of him—
Your good, by any means, himself unseen,
Away, forgotten!—He gives that life's task up,
As it were . . . but this charge which I return—

[*Offers the Requisition, which she takes.*

Wishing your good!

The D. [having subscribed it.] And opportunely, sir—
Since at a birthday's close, like this of mine,
Good wishes gentle deeds reciprocate.
Most on a wedding day, as mine is too,
Should gifts be thought of: yours comes first by right.
Ask of me!

Berth. He shall have whate'er he asks,
For your sake and his own!

Val. [Aside.] If I should ask—
The withered bunch of flowers she wears—perhaps,
One last touch of her hand, I never more
Shall see!

] After a pause, presenting his paper to the Prince.
Cleves' Prince, redress the wrongs of Cleves!

Berth. I will, sir!

The D. [as VALENCE prepares to retire.] —Nay, do out your
duty, first!

You bore this paper: I have registered
My answer to it: read it and have done! [VALENCE reads it.
—I take him—give up Juliers and the world!
This is my Birthday.

Mel. Berthold, my one hero
 Of the world she gives up, one friend worth my books,
 Sole man I think it pays the pains to watch,—
 Speak, for I know you through your Popes and Kings !

Berth. [after a pause.] Lady, well rewarded ! Sir, as well deserved !

I could not imitate—I hardly envy—
 I do admire you ! All is for the best !
 Too costly a flower were you, I see it now,
 To pluck and set upon my barren helm
 To wither—any garish plume will do !
 I'll not insult you and refuse your Duchy—
 You can so well afford to yield it me,
 And I were left, without it, sadly off !
 As it is—for me—if that will flatter you,
 A somewhat wearier life seems to remain
 Than I thought possible where . . . 'faith, their life
 Begins already—they're too occupied
 To listen—and few words content me best !

[*Abruptly to the Courtiers.*] I am your Drnke, though ! Who obey me here ?

The D. Adolf and Sabyne follow us—

Gui. [starting from the Courtiers.] —And I ?

Do I not follow them, if I mayn't you ?
 Shall not I get some little duties up
 At Ravestein and emulate the rest ?
 God save you, Gauceline ! 'Tis my Birthday too !

Berth. You happy handful that remain with me
 . . . That is, with Dietrich the black Barnabite
 I shall leave over you—will earn your wages,
 Or Dietrich has forgot to ply his trade !
 Meantime,—go copy me the precedents
 Of every installation, proper styles,
 And pedigrees of all your Juliers' Dukes—
 While I prepare to go on my old way,
 And somewhat wearily, I must confess !

The D. [with a light joyous laugh as she turns from them]

Come, Valence, to our friends—God's earth . . .

Val. [as she falls into his arms.] —And thee !

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.

A Tragedy.

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.

PERSONS.

MILDRED TRESHAM.
GUENDOLEN TRESHAM.
THOROLD, Lord Tresham.
AUSTIN TRESHAM.
HENRY, Earl Mertoun.
GERARD.
Other Retainers of Lord Tresham.

TIME, 17—

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The interior of a Lodge in LORD TRESHAM's Park. Many Retainers crowded at the window, supposed to command a view of the entrance to his Mansion. GERARD, the Warrener, sitting alone, his back to a table on which are flaggons, &c.*

1st Ret. Ay—do—push, friends, and then you'll push down me.

—What for? Does any hear a runner's foot,
Or a steed's trample, or a coach-wheel's cry?
Is the Earl come or his least poursuivant?
But there's no breeding in a man of you
Save Gerard yonder: here's a half-place yet,
Old Gerard!

Ger. Save your courtesies, my friend.
Here is my place.

2nd. Ret. Now, Gerard, out with it!
What makes you sullen, this of all the days
I' the year? To-day that young, rich, bountiful,
Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they match
With our Lord Tresham thro' the country-side,

Is coming here in utmost bravery
To ask our Master's Sister's hand ?

Ger.

What then ?

2nd Ret. What then ? Why, you she speaks to, if she meets
Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart
The boughs to let her thro' her forest walks,
You, always favourite for your no-deserts,
You've heard, these three days, how Earl Mertoun sues
To lay his heart, and house, and broad lands too,
At Lady Mildred's feet—and while we squeeze
Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss
One congee of the least page in his train,
You sit o' one side—"there 's the Earl," say I—
"What then," say you !

3rd Ret. I'll wager he has let
Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred, swin
Over the falls and gain the river !

Ger. Ralph,
Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day
For you and for your hawks ?

4th Ret. Let Gerard be !
He 's coarse-grained, like his carved black cross-bow stock.
Ha, look now, while we squabble with him, look !
Well done, now—is not this beginning, now,
To purpose ?

1st Ret. Our retainers look as fine--
That 's comfort ! Lord, how Richard holds himself
With his white staff ! Will not a knave behind
Prick him upright ?

4th Ret. He 's only bowing, fool !
The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.

1st Ret. That 's comfort . Here 's a very cavalcade !

3rd. Ret. I don't see wherefore Richard, and his troop
Of silk and silver varlets there, should find
Their perfumed selves so indispensable
On high days, holy-days ! Would it so disgrace
Our Family, if I, for instance, stood—
In my right hand a cast of Swedish hawks,
A leash of greyhounds in my left ?—

Ger. —With Hugh
The logman for supporter—in his right
The bill-hook—in his left the brush-wood shears !

3rd Ret. Out on you, crab ! What next, what next ? The
Earl !

1st Ret. Oh, Walter, groom, our horses, do they match
The Earl's ? Alas, that first pair of the six—
They paw the ground—Ah, Walter ! and that brute
Just on his haunches by the wheel !

6th Ret.

Ay—Ay!

You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,
 At soups and sauces—what's a horse to you?
 D'ye mark that beast they've slid into the midst
 So cunningly?—then, Philip, mark this further;
 No leg has he to stand on!

1st Ret.

No? That's a comfort.

2nd Ret. Peace, Cook! The Earl descends.—Well, Gerard,
see

The Earl at least! Come, there's a proper man,
 I hope! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole or Swede,
 Has got a starrier eye—

3rd Ret.

His eyes are blue—

But leave my hawks alone!

4th Ret.

So young, and yet

So tall and shapely!

5th Ret.

Here's Lord Tresham's self!

There now—there's what a nobleman should be!
 He's older, graver, loftier, he's more like
 A House's Head!

2nd Ret.

But you'd not have a boy

—And what's the Earl beside?—possess too soon
 That stateliness?*1st Ret.*

Our Master takes his hand—

Richard and his white staff are on the move—

Back full our people—(tsh!—there's Timothy

Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties—

And Peter's cursed rosette's a-coming off!)

—At last I see our Lord's back and his friend's—

And the whole beautiful bright company

Close round them—in they go! [Jumping down from the
*window-bench, and making for the table and its
 jugs, &c.]* Good health, long life,

Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his House!

6th Ret. My father drove his father first to court,
 After his marriage-day—ay, did he!*2nd Ret.*

God bless

Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the Earl!

Here, Gerard, reach your beaker!

Ger.

Drink, my boys:

Don't mind me—all's not right about me—drink!

2nd Ret. [Aside.]He's vexed, now, that he let the show
 escape!

[To GER.] Remember that the Earl returns this way—

Ger. That way?*2nd Ret.*

Just so.

Ger.

Then my way's here.

2nd Ret.[Goes
Old Gerard.]

Will die soon—mind, I said it ! He was used
 To care about the pitifullest thing
 That touched the House's honour, not an eye
 But his could see wherein—and on a cause
 Of scarce a quarter this importance, Gerard
 Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away
 In cares that this was right, nor that was wrong,
 Such a point decorous, and such by rule—
 (He knew such niceties, no herald more)
 And now—you see his humour : die he will !

2nd Ret. God help him ! Who 's for the great servants'-hall
 To hear what 's going on inside ? They 'd follow
 Lord Tresham into the saloon.

3rd Ret.

I !—

4th Ret.

I !—

Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,
 Some hint of how the parley goes inside !
 Prosperity to the great House once more—
 Here 's the last drop !

1st Ret.

Have at you ! Boys, hurrah

SCENE II.—*A Saloon in the Mansion.*

Enter Lord TRESHAM, Lord MERTOUN ; AUSTIN and GUENDOLEN.

Tresh. I welcome you, Lord Mertoun, yet once more,
 To this ancestral roof of mine. Your name
 —Noble among the noblest in itself,
 Yet taking in your person, faime avers,
 New price and lustre,—(as that gem you wear,
 Transmitted from a hundred knightly breasts,
 Fresh chased and set and fixed by its last lord,
 Seems to re-kindle at the core)—your name
 Would win you welcome !—

Mer.

Thanks !

Tresh.

--But add to that,

The worthiness and grace and dignity
 Of your proposal for uniting both
 Our Houses even closer than respect
 Unites them now—add these, and you must grant
 One favour more, nor that the least,—to think
 The welcome I should give ;—'tis given ! My lord,
 My only brother, Austin—he 's the King's.

Our cousin, Lady Guendolen—betrothed
To Austin : all are yours.

Mer. I thank you—less
For the expressed commendings which your seal,
And only that, authenticates—forbids
My putting from me . . . to my heart I take
Your praise . . . but praise less claims my gratitude,
Than the indulgent insight it implies
Of what must needs be uppermost with one
Who comes, like me, with the bare leave to ask,
In weighed and measured unimpassioned words,
A gift which, if as calmly 'tis denied,
He must withdraw, content upon his cheek,
Despair within his soul :—that I dare ask
Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence
That gift, I have to thank you.—Yes, Lord Tresham,
I love your sister—as you'd have one love
That lady . . . oh more, more I love her ! Wealth,
Rank, all the world thinks *me*, they're yours, you know,
To hold or part with, at your choice—but grant
My true self, *me* without a rood of land,
A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,
Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death or life ?

Guen. [*apart to Aus.*] Why, this is loving, Austin !

Aus. He's so young !

Guen. Young ? Old enough, I think, to half-surnise
He never had obtained an entrance here,
Were all this fear and trembling needed.

Aus. Hush !
He reddens.

Guen. Mark him, Austin ; that's true love !
Ours must begin again.

Tresh. We'll sit, my lord.
Ever with best desert goes diffidence.
I may speak plainly nor be misconceived.
That I am wholly satisfied with you
On this occasion, when a falcon's eye
Were dull compared with mine to search out faults.
Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to give
Or to refuse.

Mer. But you, you grant my suit ?
I have your word if hers ?

Tresh. My best of words
If hers encourage you. I trust it will.
Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way ?

Mer. I . . . I . . . our two demesnes, remember, touch—
I have been used to wander carelessly
After my stricken game—the heron roused

Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken wing
 Thro' thicks and glades a mile in yours,—or else
 Some eyas ill-reclaimed has taken flight
 And lured me after her from tree to tree,
 I marked not whither . . . I have come upon
 The Lady's wondrous beauty unaware,
 And—and then . . . I have seen her.

Guen. [aside to Aus.] Note that mode
 Of faltering out that when a lady passed
 He, having eyes, did see her ! You had said—
 “On such a day I scanned her, head to foot ;
 “Observed a red, where red should not have been,
 “Outside her elbow ; but was pleased enough
 “Upon the whole.” Let such irreverent talk
 Be lessened for the future !

Tresh. What's to say
 May be said briefly. She has never known
 A mother's care ; I stand for father too.
 Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems—
 You cannot know the good and tender heart,
 Its girl's trust, and its woman's constancy,
 How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,
 How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free
 As light where friends are—how embued with lore
 The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet
 The . . . one might know I talked of Mildred—thus
 We brothers talk !

Mer. I thank you.

Tresh. In a word,
 Control's not for this lady ; but her wish
 To please me outstrips in its subtlety
 My power of being pleased—herself creates
 The want she means to satisfy, My heart
 Prefers your suit to her as 'twere its own.
 Can I say more ?

Mer. No more—thanks, thanks—no more !

Tresh. This matter then discussed . . .

Mer. . . . We'll waste no breath
 On aught less precious—I'm beneath the roof
 That holds her : while I thought of that, my speech
 To you would wander—as it must not do,
 Since as you favour me I stand or fall.
 I pray you suffer that I take my leave !

Tresh. With less regret 'tis suffered, that again
 We meet, I hope, so shortly.

Mer. We? again?—
 Ah yes, forgive me—when shall . . . you will crown
 Your goodness by forthwith apprising me

When . . if . . the Lady will appoint a day
For me to wait on you—and her.

Tresh. So soon
As I am made acquainted with her thoughts
On your proposal—howsoe'er they lean—
A messenger shall bring you the result.

Mer. You cannot bind me more to you, my lord.
Farewell till we renew . . I trust, renew
A converse ne'er to disunite again.

Tresh. So may it prove!

Mer. You, Lady, you, Sir, take
My humble salutation!

Guen. & Aus. Thanks!

Tresh. Within there!

[Servants enter. TRESHAM conducts MERTOUN to the door.
Meantime AUSTIN remarks,—

Well,

Here I have an advantage of the Earl,
Confess now ! I'd not think that all was safe
Because my lady's brother stood my friend.
Why, he makes sure of her—"do you say, yes—
"She'll not say, no"—what comes it to beside?
I should have prayed the brother, "speak this speech,
"For Heaven's sake urge this on her—put in this—
"Forget not, as you'd save me, t'other thing.—
"Then set down what she says, and how she looks,
"And if she smiles," and (in an under breath)
"Only let her accept me, and do you
"And all the world refuse me, if you dare!"

Guen. That way you'd take, friend Austin ? What a shame
I was your cousin, tamely from the first
Your bride, and all this fervour's run to waste !
Do you know you speak sensibly to-day ?
The Earl's a fool.

Aus. Here's Thorold. Tell him so !

Tresh. (returning.) Now, voices, voices ! 'St ! the lady's
first !

How seems he ?—seems he not . . come, faith give fraud
The niueray-stroke whenever they engage !
Down with fraud—up with faith ! How seems the Earl ?
A name ! a blazon ! if you knew their worth,
As you will never ! come—the Earl ?

Guen. He's young.

Tresh. What's she ? an infant save in heart and brain.
Young ! Mildred is fourteen, remark ! And you . .
Austin, how old is she ?

Guen. There's tact for you !

I meant that being young was good excuse
If one should tax him . . .

Tresh. Well ?

Guen. —With lacking wit.

Tresh. He lacked wit ? Where might he lack wit, so please you ?

Guen. In standing straighter than the steward's rod
And making you the tiresomest harangues,
Instead of slipping over to my side
And softly whispering in my ear, "Sweet lady,
" Your cousin there will do me detriment
" He little dreams of—he's absorbed, I see,
" In my old name and fame—be sure he'll leave
" My Mildred, when his best account of me
" Is ended, in full confidence I wear
" My grandsire's periwig down either cheek.
" I'm lost unless your gentleness vouchsafes" . . .

Tresh. . . . "To give a best of best accounts, yourself,
" Of me and my demerits." You are right !
He should have said what now I say for him.
You golden creature, will you help us all ?
Here's Austin means to vouch for much, but you
—You are . . . what Austin only knows ! Come up,
All three of us—she's in the Library
No doubt, for the day's wearing fast. Precede !

Guen. Austin, how we must —!

Tresh. Must what ? Must speak truth,
Malignant tongue ! Detect one fault in him !
I challenge you !

Guen. Witchcraft's a fault in him,
For you're bewitched.

Tresh. What's urgent we obtain
Is, that she soon receive him—say, to-morrow—
Next day at farthest.

Guen. Ne'er instruct me !

Tresh. Come !
—He's out of your good graces since, forsooth,
He stood not as he'd carry us by storm
With his perfections ! You're for the composed,
Manly, assured, becoming confidence !
—Get her to say, "to-morrow," and I'll give you . . .
I'll give you black Urganda, to be spoiled
With petting and snail-paces. Will you ? Come !

SCENE III.—MILDRED'S Chamber. *A painted window out looks the park.* MILDRED and GUENDOLEN.

Guen. Now, Mildred, spare those pains. I have not left Our talkers in the Library, and climbed The wearisome ascent to this your bower In company with you,—I have not dared . . Nay, worked such prodigies as sparing you Lord Mertoun's pedigree before the flood, Which Thorold seemed in very act to tell— —Or bringing Austin to pluck up that most Firm-rooted heresy—your suitor's eyes, He would maintain, were gray instead of blue— I think I brought him to contrition !—Well, I have not done such things, (all to deserve A minute's quiet cousin's-talk with you,) To be dismissed so coolly !

Mil. Guendolen,
What have I done . . what could suggest . .

Guen. There, there !
Do I not comprehend you'd be alone
To throw those testimonies in a heap,
Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities,
With that poor, silly, heartless Guendolen's
Ill-timed, misplaced, attempted smartnesses—
And sift their sense out ? now, I come to spare you
Nearly a whole night's labour. Ask and have !
Demand, be answered ! Lack I ears and eyes ?
Am I perplexed which side of the rock-table
The Conqueror dined on when he landed first,
Lord Mertoun's ancestor was bidden take—
The bow-hand or the arrow-hand's great meed ?
Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes !

Mil. My brother—
Did he . . you said that he received him well ?

Guen. If I said only "well" I said not much—
Oh, stay—which brother ?

Mil. Thorold ! who—who else ?

Guen. Thorold (a secret) is too proud by half,—
Nay, hear me out—with us he's even gentler
Than we are with our birds. Of this great House
The least retainer that e'er caught his glance
Would die for him, real dying—no mere talk :
And in the world, the court, if men would cite

The perfect spirit of honour, Thorold's name
Rises of its clear nature to their lips :
But he should take men's homage, trust in it,
And care no more about what drew it down.
He has desert, and that, acknowledgment ;
Is he content ?

Mil. You wrong him, Guendolen.

Guen. He's proud, confess ; so proud with brooding o'er
The light of his interminable line,
An ancestry with men all paladins,
And women all . . .

Mil. Dear Guendolen, 'tis late !
When yonder purple pane the climbing moon
Pierces, I know 'tis midnight.

Guen. Well, that Thorold
Should rise up from such musings, and receive
One come audaciously to graft himself
Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,
No slightest spot in such an one . . .

Mil. Who finds
A spot in Mertoun ?

Guen. Not your brother ; therefore,
Not the whole world.

Mil. I'm weary, Guendolen.—
Bear with me !

Guen. I am foolish.

Mil. Oh, no, kind—
But I would rest.

Guen. Good night and rest to you.
I said how gracefully his mantle lay
Beneath the rings of his light hair ?

Mil. Brown hair !

Guen. Brown ? why it is brown -- how could you know that ?

Mil. How ? did not you—Oh, Austin 'twas, declared
His hair was light, not brown—my head !—and, look,
The moon-beam purpling the dark chamber ! Sweet,
Good night !

Guen. Forgive me—sleep the soundlier for me !

[*Going, she turns suddenly.*
Mildred !

Perdition ! all 's discovered.—Thorold finds
—That the Earl's greatest of all grandmothers
Was grander daughter still—to that fair dame
Whose garter slipped down at the famous dance ! [Gocs.

Mil. Is she—can she be really gone at last ?
My heart—I shall not reach the window ! Needs
Must I have sinned much, so to suffer !

[*She lifts the small lamp which is suspended before*

*the Virgin's image in the window, and places it by
the purple pane.]* There !

[*She returns to the seat in front.*

Mildred and Mertoun ! Mildred, with consent
Of all the world and Thorold,—Mertoun's bride !
Too late ! 'Tis sweet to think of, sweeter still
To hope for, that this blessed end soothes up
The curse of the beginning ; but I know
It comes too late—'twill sweetest be of all
To dream my soul away and die upon ! [A noise without.
The voice ! Oh, why, why glided sin the snake
Into the Paradise Heaven meant us both ?

[*The window opens softly.—A low voice sings.*

There's a woman like a dew-drop, she's so purer than the purest :
And her noble heart's the noblest, yes, and her sure faith's the surest .
And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on depth of lustre
Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wild-grape cluster,
Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-misted marble :
Then her voice's music . . . call it the well's bubbling, the bird's warble !

[*A figure wrapped in a mantle appears at the window.*

And this woman says, " My days were sunless and my nights were moonless,
" Purch'd the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's heart's outbreak tuneless,
" If you loved me not ! " And I who -(ah, for words of flame !) adore her !
Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably before her .

[*He enters—approaches her seat, and bends over her.*

I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice takes me,
And by noontide as by midnight make her mine, as hers she makes me !

[*The Earl throws off his clouted hat and long cloak.*

My very heart sings, so I sing, beloved !

Mil. Sit, Henry—do not take my hand.

Mer. "Tis mine !

The meeting that appalled us both so much
Is ended.

Mil. What begins now ?

Mer. Happiness

Such as the world contains not.

Mil. That is it.

Our happiness would, as you say, exceed
The whole world's best of blisses : we—do we
Deserve that ? Utter to your soul, what mine
Long since, beloved, has grown used to hear,
Like a death-knell, so much regardee once,
And so familiar now ; this will not be !

Mer. Oh, Mildred, have I met your brother's face,
Compelled myself—if not to speak untruth,
Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside
The truth, as what had e'er prevailed on me

Save you, to venture? Have I gained at last
 Your brother, the one scarer of your dreams,
 And waking thoughts' sole apprehension too?
 Does a new life, like a young sunrise, break
 On the strange unrest of our night, confused
 With rain and stormy flaw—and will you see
 No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted drops
 On each live spray, no vapour steaming up,
 And no expressless glory in the east?
 When I am by you, to be ever by you,
 When I have won you and may worship you,
 Oh, Mildred, can you say "this will not be?"

Mil. Sin has surprised us; so will punishment.

Mer. No—me alone, who sinned alone!

Mil. The night
 You likened our past life to—was it storm
 Throughout to you then, Henry?

Mer. Of your life
 I spoke—what am I, what my life, to waste
 A thought about when you are by me?—you
 It was, I said my folly called the storm
 And pulled the night upon.—'Twas day with me—
 Perpetual dawn with me.

Mil. Come what, come will,
 You have been happy—take my hand!

Mer. [after a pause.] How good
 Your brother is! I figured him a cold—
 Shall I say, haughty man?

Mil. They told me all.
 I know all.

Mer. It will soon be over.

Mil. Over?
 Oh, what is over? what must I live thro'
 And say, "'tis over?" Is our meeting over?
 Have I received in presence of them all
 The partner of my guilty love,—with brow
 Trying to seem a maiden's brow—with lips
 Which make believe that when they strive to form
 Replies to you and tremble as they strive,
 It is the nearest ever they approached
 A stranger's . . Henry, yours that stranger's . . lip—
 With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that is . . .
 Ah, God! some prodigy of thine will stop
 This planned piece of deliberate wickedness
 In its birth even—some fierce leprous spot
 Will mar the brow's dissimulating—I
 Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by heart,
 But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful story,

The love, the shame, and the despair—with them
 Round me aghast as men round some cursed fount
 That should spirt water, and spouts blood. I'll not
 . . . Henry, you do not wish that I should draw
 This vengeance down? I'll not affect a grace
 That's gone from me—gone once, and gone for ever!

Mil. Mildred, my honour is your own. I'll share
 Disgrace I cannot suffer by myself.
 A word informs your brother I retract
 This morning's offer; time will yet bring forth
 Some better way of saving both of us.

Mil. I'll meet their faces, Mertoun!

Mil. When? to-morrow?
 Get done with it!

Mil. Oh, Henry, not to-morrow!
 Next day! I never shall prepare my words
 And looks and gestures sooner!—How you must
 Despise me!

Mil. Mildred, break it if you choose,
 A heart the love of you uplifted—still
 Uplifts, thro' this protracted agony,
 To Heaven! but, Mildred, answer me,—first pace
 The chamber with me—once again—now, say
 Calmly the part, the . . . what it is of me
 You see contempt (for you did say contempt)
 —Contempt for you in! I would pluck it off
 And cast it from me!—but no—no, you'll not
 Repeat that?—will you, Mildred, repeat that?

Mil. Dear Henry—

Mil. I was scarce a boy—e'en now
 What am I more? And you were infantine
 When first I met you—why, your hair fell loose
 On either side!—my fool's cheek reddens now
 Only in the recalling how it burned
 That morn to see the shape of many a dream
 —You know we boys are prodigal of charms
 To her we dream of—I had heard of one,
 Had dreamed of her, and I was close to her,
 Might speak to her, might live and die her own,
 Who knew?—I spoke—Oh, Mildred, feel you not
 That now, while I remember every glance
 Of yours, each word of yours, with power to test
 And weigh them in the diamond scales of Pride,
 Resolved the treasure of a first and last
 Heart's love shall have been bartered at its worth,
 —That now I think upon your purity
 And utter ignorance of guilt—your own
 Or other's guilt—the girlish, undisguised

Delight at a strange novel prize—(I talk
 A silly language, but interpret, you !)
 If I, with fancy at its full, and reason
 Scarce in its germ, enjoined you secrecy,
 If you had pity on my passion, pity
 On my protested sickness of the soul
 To sit beside you, hear you breathe, and watch
 Your eyelids and the eyes beneath—if you
 Accorded gifts and knew not they were gifts—
 If I grew mad at last with enterprise
 And must behold my beauty in her bower
 Or perish—(I was ignorant of even
 My own desires—what then were you ?) if sorrow—
 Sin—if the end came—must I now renounce
 My reason, blind myself to light, say truth
 Is false and lie to God and my own soul ?
 Contempt were all of this !

Mil. Do you believe . . .
 Or, Henry, I 'll not wrong you—you believe
 That I was ignorant. I scarce grieve o'er
 The past ! We 'll love on—you will love me still !

Mer. Oh, to love less what one has injured ! Dove,
 Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my breast—
 Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee into strength ?
 Flower I have crushed, shall I not care for thee ?
 Bloom o'er my crest my fight-mark and device !
 Mildred, I love you and you love me !

Mil. Go !
 Be that your last word. I shall sleep to-night.

Mer. This is not our last meeting ?

Mil. One night more.

Mer. And then—think, then !

Mil. Then, no sweet courtship-days,
 No dawning consciousness of love for us,
 No strange and palpitating births of sense
 From words and looks, no innocent fears and hopes,
 Reserves and confidences : morning 's over !

Mer. How else should love's perfected noon tide follow ?
 All the dawn promised shall the day perform.

Mil. So may it be ! but—

You are cautious, love ?
 Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls ?

Mer. Oh, trust me ! Then our final meeting's fixed ?
 To-morrow night ?

Mil. Farewell ! Stay, Henry . . . wherefore ?
 His foot is on the yew-tree bough—the turf
 Receives him—now the moonlight as he runs
 Embraces him—but he must go—is gone—

Ah, once again he turns—thanks, thanks, my love !
 He 's gone—Oh, I 'll believe him every word !
 I was so young—I loved him so—I had
 No mother—God forgot me—and I fell.
 There may be pardon yet—all 's doubt beyond.
 Surely the bitterness of death is past !

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The Library.**Enter LORD TRESHAM hastily.*

This way—In, Gerard, quick !

[As GERARD enters, TRESHAM seizes the door.
Now speak ! or, wait.I 'll bid you speak directly. *[Seals himself.*

Now repeat

Firmly and circumstantially the tale
 You 've just now told me ; it eludes me ; either
 I did not listen, or the half is gone
 Away from me—How long have you lived here ?
 Here in my house, your father kept our woods
 Before you ?*Ger.* —As his father did, my lord.
 I have been eating sixty years, almost,
 Your bread.*Tresh.* Yes, yes—you ever were of all
 The servants in my father's house, I know,
 The trusted one. You 'll speak the truth.*Ger.* I 'll speak
 God's truth : night after night . . .*Tresh.* Since when ?*Ger.* At least
 A month—each midnight has some man access
 To Lady Mildred's chamber.*Tresh.* Tush ! "access"—
 No wide words like "access" to me !*Ger.* He runs
 Along the woodside, crosses to the south,
 Takes the left tree that ends the avenue . . .*Trish.* The last great yew-tree ?
Ger. You might stand upon
 The main boughs like a platform . . . Then he . . .*Tresh.* Quick !

Ger. . . . Climbs up, and, where they lessen at the top,
—I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,
I think—for this I do not vouch—a line
That reaches to the Lady's casement—

Tresh. — Which
He enters not! Gerard—some wretched fool
Dares pry into my sister's privacy!
When such are young, it seems a precious thing
To have approached,—to merely have approached,
Got sight of, the abode of her they set
Their frantic thoughts upon! He does not enter?
Gerard?

Ger. There is a lamp that's full in the midst,
Under a red square in the painted glass
Of Lady Mildred's . . .

Tresh. Leave that name out! Well?
That lamp?

Ger. — Is moved at midnight higher up
To one pane—a small dark-blue pane—he waits
For that among the boughs; at sight of that,
I see him, plain as I see you, my lord,
Open the Lady's casement, enter there . . .

Tresh. — And stay?

Ger. An hour, two hours.

Tresh. And this you saw
Once?—twice?—quick!

Ger. Twenty times.

Tresh. And what brings you
Under the yew-trees?

Ger. The first night I left
My range so far, to track the stranger stag
That broke the pale, I saw the man.

Tresh. Yet sent
No cross-brow shaft thro' the marauder?

Ger. But
He came, my lord, the first time he was seen,
In a great moonlight, light as any day,
From Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresh. [after a pause.] You have no cause—
—Who could have cause—to do my sister wrong?

Ger. Oh, my lord, only once—let me this once
Speak what is on my mind! Since first I noted
All this, I've groaned as if a fiery net
Plucked me this way and that—fire, if I turned
To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire,
If down I flung myself and strovo to die.
The lady could not have been seven years old
When I was trusted to conduct her safe

Thro' the deer-herd to stroke the snow-white fawn
 I brought to eat bread from her tiny hand
 Within a month. She ever had a smile
 To greet me with—she . . if it could undo
 What 's done to lop each limb from off this trunk . .
 All that is foolish talk, not fit for you—
 I mean, I could not speak and bring her hurt
 For Heaven's compelling: but when I was fixed
 To hold my peace, each morsel of your food
 Eaten beneath your roof, my birth place too,
 Choked me. I wish I had grown mad in doubts
 What it behoved me do. This morn it seemed
 Either I must confess to you, or die:
 Now it is done, I seem the vilest worm
 That crawls, to have betrayed my Lady!

Tresh. No—
 No—Gerard!

Ger. Let me go!
Tresh. A man, you say—
 'What man? Young? Not a vulgar hind? What dress?
Ger. A slouched hat and a large dark foreign cloak
 Wraps his whole form: even his face is hid;
 But I should judge him young; no hind, be sure!

Tresh. Why?
Ger. He is ever armed: his sword projects
 Beneath the cloak.

Tresh. Gerard, —I will not say
 No word, no breath of this!

Ger. Thanks, thanks, my lord! *Goes.*

TRESHAM paces the room. After a pause,
 Oh, thought 's absurd!—as with some monstrous fact
 That, when ill thoughts beset us, seems to give
 Merciful God that made the sun and stars,
 The waters and the green delights of earth,
 The lie! I apprehend the monstrous fact—
 Yet know the Maker of all worlds is good,
 And yield my reason up, inadequate
 To reconcile what yet I do behold—
 Blasting my sense! There 's cheerful day outside—
 This is my library—and this the chair
 My father used to sit in carelessly,
 After his soldier-fashion, while I stood
 Between his knees to question him—and here,
 Gerard our grey retainer,—as he says,
 Fed with our food from sire to son an age,—
 Has told a story—I am to believe!
 That Mildred . . . oh, no, no! both tales are true,
 Her pure cheek's story and the forester's!

Would she, or could she, err—much less, confound
 All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . . Heaven
 Keep me within its hand!—I will sit hero
 Until thought settles and I see my course.
 Avert, O God, only this woe from me!

[*As he sinks his head between his arms on the table,*
GUENDOLEN's voice is heard at the door.

Lord Tresham! [*She knocks.*] Is Lord Tresham there?
 [TRESHAM, hastily turning, pulls down the first book
 above him and opens it.]

Tresh. Come in! [She enters.] Ah, Guendolen—good morning.

Guen. Nothing more?

Tresh. What should I say more?

Guen. Pleasant question! more? This more! Did I besiege poor Mildred's brain
 Last night till close on morning with "the Earl"—
 "The Earl"—whose worth did I asseverate
 Till I am very fain to hope that . . . Thorold,
 What is all this? You are not well!

Tresh. Who, I? You laugh at me.

Guen. Has what I'm fain to hope
 Arrived, then? Does that huge time show some blot
 In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer back
 Than Arthur's time?

Tresh. When left you Mildred's chamber?
 Guen. Oh, late enough, I told you! The main thing
 To ask is, how I left her chamber,—sure,
 Content yourself, she'll grant this paragon
 Of Earls no such ungracious . . .

Tresh. Send her here!
 Guen. Thorold?

Tresh. I mean—acquaint her, Guendolen,—
 —But mildly!

Guen. Mildly?

Tresh. Ah, you guess'd aright!
 I am not well—there is no hiding it.
 But tell her I would see her at her leisure—
 That is, at once! here in the Library!
 The passage in that old Italian book
 We hunted for so long is found, say,—found—
 And if I let it slip again . . . you see,
 That she must come—and instantly!

Guen. I'll die
 Piecemeal, record that, if there have not gloomed
 Some blot i' the 'scutcheon!

Tresh. Go! or, Guendolen,

Be you at call,—with Austin, if you choose,—
 In the adjoining gallery—There, go ! [GUENDOLEN goes.
 Another lesson to me ! you might bid
 A child disguise his heart's sore, and conduct
 Some sly investigation point by point
 With a smooth brow, as well as bid me catch
 The inquisitorial cleverness some praise !
 If you had told me yesterday, “ There's one
 “ You needs must circumvent and practise with,
 “ Entrap by policies, if you would worm
 “ The truth out—and that one is—Mildred ! ” There—
 There— reasoning is thrown away on it !
 Prove she's unchaste . . . why you may after prove
 That she's a poisoner, traitress, what you will !
 Where I can comprehend nought, nought's to say,
 Or do, or think ! Force on me but the first
 Abomination,—then outpour all plagues,
 And I shall ne'er make count of them !

Enter MILDRED.

Mil. What book
 Is it I wanted, Thorold ? Guendolen
 Thought you were pale—you are not pale ! That book ?
 That's Latin surely !

Tresh. Mildred—here's a line—
 (Don't lean on me—I'll English it for you)
 “ Love conquers all things.” What love conquers them ?
 What love should you esteem—best love ?

Mil. True love.
Tresh. I mean, and should have said, whose love is best
 Of all that love or that profess to love ?

Mil. The list's so long—there's father's, mother's, hus-
 band's . . .

Tresh. Mildred, I do believe a brother's love
 For a sole sister must exceed them all !
 For see now, only see ! there's no alloy
 Of earth that creeps into the perfect' st gold
 Of other loves—no gratitude to claim ;
 You never gave her life—not even aught
 That keeps life—never tended her, instructed,
 Enriched her—so your love can claim no right
 O'er hers save pure love's claim—that's what I call
 Freedom from earthliness. You'll never hope
 To be such friends, for instance, she and you,
 As when you hunted cowslips in the woods,
 Or played together in the meadow hay.
 Oh yes—with age, respect comes, and your worth
 Is felt, there's growing sympathy of tastes,

There's ripened friendship, there's confirmed esteem,
 —Much head these make against the new-comer!
 The startling apparition—the strange youth—
 Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or, say,
 Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all change
 This Ovid ever sang about!) your soul
 . . . *Her* soul, that is,—the sister's soul! With her
 'Twas winter yesterday; now, all is warmth,
 The green leaf's springing and the turtle's voice,
 "Arise and come away!" Come whither? — far
 Enough from the esteem, respect, and all
 The brother's somewhat insignificant
 Array of rights! all which he knows before—
 Has calculated on so long ago!
 I think such love, (apart from yours and mine,) Contented with its little term of life,
 Intending to retire betimes, aware
 How soon the background must be place for it,
 I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds
 All the world's loves in its unworldliness.

Mil. What is this for?

Tresh. This, Mildred, is it for?
 Oh, no, I cannot go to it so soon!
 That's one of many points my haste left out—
 Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-slight film
 Between the being tied to you by birth,
 And you, until those slender threads compose
 A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes
 And fears and fancies, all her life, from yours—
 So close you live and yet so far apart!
 And must I rend this web, tear up, break down
 The sweet and palpitating mystery
 That makes her sacred? You—for you I mean,
 Shall I speak—shall I not speak?

Mil.

Speak!

I will.

Tresh. Is there a story men could—any man
 Could tell of you, you would conceal from me?
 I'll never think there's falsehood on that lip!
 Say "There is no such story men could tell,"
 And I'll believe you, tho' I disbelieve
 The world . . . the world of better men than I,
 And women such as I suppose you—Speak!
 [After a pause.] Not speak? Explain then! clear it up, then!

Move

Some of the miserable weight away
 That presses lower than the grave! Not speak?
 Some of the dead weight, Mildred! Ah, if I

'Could bring myself to plainly make their charge
Against you ! Must I, Mildred ? Silent still ?
[After a pause.] Is there a gallant that has night by night
Admittance to your chamber ?

[After a pause.] Then, his name !
Till now, I only had a thought for you—
But now,—his name !

Mil. Thorold, do you devise
Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit
There be ! 'tis nought to say that I'll endure
And bless you,—that my spirit yearns to purge
Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire—
But do not plunge me into other guilt !
Oh, guilt enough ! I cannot tell his name.

Tresh. Then judge yourself ! How should I act ? Pronounce !

Mil. Oh, Thorold, you must never tempt me thus !
To die here in this chamber by that sword
Would seem like punishment—so should I glide,
Like an arch-cheat, into extremest bliss !
'Twere easily arranged for me ! but you—
What would become of you ?

Tresh. And what will now
Become of me ? I'll hide your shame and mine
From every eye ; the dead must heave their hearts
Under the marble of our chapel-floor ;
They cannot rise and blast you ! You may wed
Your paramour above our mother's tomb ;
Our mother cannot move from 'neath your foot.
We two will somehow wear this one day out :
But with to-morrow hastens here—the Earl !
The youth without suspicion that faces come
From Heaven, and hearts from . . . whence proceed such hearts ?
I have despatched last night at your command
A missive bidding him present himself
To-morrow here—thus much is said—the rest
Is understood as if 'twere written down—
“ His suit finds favour in your eyes,”—now dictate
This morning's letter that shall countermand
Last night's—do dictate that !

Mil. But, Thorold—if
I will receive him as I said ?
Tresh. *The Earl?*
Mil. I will receive him !
Tresh. [Starting up.] Ho there ! Guendolen !

GUENDOLEN and AUSTIN enter.
And, Austin, you are welcome too ! Look there !
The woman there !

Aus. & Guen. How? Mildred?

Tresh.

Mildred once!

Now the receiver night by night, when sleep
Blesses the inmates of her father's house,
—I say, the soft sly wanton that receives
Her guilt's accomplice 'neath this roo' which holds
You, Guendolen, you, Austin, and has held
A thousand Treshams—never one like her!
No lighter of the signal lamp her quick
Foul breath near quenches in hot eagerness
To mix with breath as foul! no loosener
Of the lattice, practised in the stealthy tread,
The low voice and the noiseless come-and-go!
Not one composer of the Bacchant's mien
Into—what you thought Mildred's, in a word!
Know her!

Guen. Oh, Mildred, look to me, at least!
Thorold—she's dead, I'd say, but that she stands
Rigid as stone and whiter!

Tresh.

You have heard . . .

Guen. Too much! you must proceed no further!

Mil.

Yes—

Proceed—All's truth! Go from me!

Tresh.

All is truth,

She tells you! Well, you know, or ought to know,
All this I would forgive in her. I'd con
Each precept the harsh world enjoins, I'd take
Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by one,
I'd bind myself before them to exact
The prescribed vengeance—and one word of hers,
The sight of her, the bare least memory
Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's pride
Above all prides, my all-in-all so long,
Had scattered every trace of my resolve!
What were it silently to waste away
And see her waste away from this day forth,
Two scathed things with leisure to repent,
And grow acquainted with the grave, and die,
Tired out if not at peace, and be forgotten?
It were not so impossible to bear!
But this—that, fresh from last night's pledge renewed
Of love with the successful gallant there,
She'll calmly bid me help her to entice,
Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth
Who thinks her all that's chaste, and good, and pure,
—Invite me to betray him . . . who so fit
As honour's self to cover shame's arch-deed?
—That she'll receive Lord Mertoun—(her own phrase)—

This, who could bear ? Why, you have heard of thieves,
 Stabbers, the earth's disgrace—who yet have laughed,
 "Talk not of tortures to me—I'll betray
 "No comrade I've pledged faith to!"—you have heard
 Of wretched women—all but Mildrcds—tied
 By wild illicit ties to losels vilo
 You'd tempt them to forsake ; and they'll reply
 "Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I have
 "In him, why should I leave him then for gold,
 "Repute, or friends?"—and you have felt your heart
 Respond to such poor outcasts of the world
 As to so many friends ; bad as you please,
 You've felt they were God's men and women still,
 So not to be disowned by you ! but she,
 That stands there, calmly gives her lover up
 As means to wed the Earl that she may hide
 Their intercourse the surer ! and, for this,
 I curse her to her face before you all !
 Shame hunt her from the earth ! Then Heaven do right
 To both ! It hears me now—shall judge her then !

[As MILDRED faints and falls, TRESHAM rushes out.

Aus. Stay, Tresham, we'll accompany you !

Guen. We ?

What, and leave Mildred ? We ? why, where's my place
 But by her side, and where's yours but by mine ?
 Mildred—one word—only look at me, then !

Aus. No, Guendolen ! I echo Thorold's voice !
 She is unworthy to behold . . .

Guен. Us two ?

If you spoke on reflection, and if I
 Approved your speech—if you (to put the thing
 At lowest) you, the soldier, bound to make
 The King's cause yours, and fight for it, and throw
 Regard to others of its right or wrong.

—If with a death-white woman you can help,
 Let alone sister, let alone a Mildred,
 You left her—or if I, her cousin, friend
 This morning, playfellow but yesterday,
 Who've said, or thought at least a thousand times,
 "I'd serve you if I could," should now face round
 And say "Ah, that's to only signify
 "I'd serve you while you're fit to serve yourself—
 "So long as fifty eyes await the turn
 "Of yours to forestall its yet half-formed wish,
 "I'll proffer my assistance you'll not need—
 "When every tongue is praising you, I'll join
 "The praisers' chorus—when you're hemmed about
 "With lives between you and detraction—lives

" To be laid down if a rude voice, rash eye,
 " Rough hand should violate the sacred ring
 " Their worship throws about you,—then indeed,
 " Who'll stand up for you stout as I ? " If so
 We said and so we did,—not Mildred there
 Would be unworthy to behold us both,
 But we should be unworthy, both of us,
 To be beheld by—by—your meanest dog,
 Which, if that sword were broken in your face
 Before a crowd, that badge torn off your breast,
 And you cast out with hootings and contempt,
 —Would push his way thro' all the hooters, gain
 Your side, go off with you and all your shame
 To the next ditch you chose to die in ! Austin,
 Do you love me ? Here's Austin, Mildred,—here's
 Your brother says he does not believe half--
 No, nor half that—of all he heard ! He says,
 Look up and take his hand !

Aus. Look up and take
 My hand, dear Mildred !

Mil. I—I was so young !
 Beside, I loved him, Thorold—and I had
 No mother—God for got me—so I fell !

Guen. Mildred !

Mil. Require no further ! Did I dream
 That I could palliate what is done ? All's true.
 Now, punish me ! A woman takes my hand !
 Let go my hand ! You do not know, I see--
 I thought that Thorold told you.

Guen. What is this ?
 Where start you to ?

Mil. Oh, Austin, loosen me !
 You heard the whole of it—your eyes were worse,
 In their surprise, than Thorold's ! Oh, unless
 You stay to execute his sentence, loose
 My hand ! Has Thorold gone, and are you here ?

Guen. Here, Mildred, we two friends of yours will wait
 Your bidding ; be you silent, sleep or muse !
 Only, when you shall want your bidding done,
 How can we do it if we are not by ?
 Here's Austin waiting patiently your will !
 One spirit to command, and one to love
 And to believe in it and do its best,
 Poor as that is; to help it—why, the world
 Has been won many a time, its length and breadth,
 By just such a beginning !

Mil. I believe
 If once I threw my arms about your neck

And sunk my head upon your breast, that I
Should weep again !

Guen. Let go her hand now, Austin.
Wait for me.—Pace the gallery and think
On the world's seemings and realities
Until I call you.

Mil. No—I cannot weep !
No more tears from this brain—no sleep—no tears !
O Guendolen, I love you !

Guen. Yes : and “love”
Is a short word that says so very much !
It says that you confide in me.

Mil. Confide !
Guen. Your lover's name, then ! I've so much to learn,
Ere I can work in your behalf !

Mil. My friend,
You know I cannot tell his name.

Guen. At least
He is your lover ? and you love him too ?

Mil. Ah, do you ask me that ?—but I am fallen
So low !

Guen. You love him still, then ?

Mil. My sole prop
Against the guilt that crushes me ! I say,
Each night ere I lie down, “I was so young—
“I had no mother—and I loved him so !”
And then God seems indulgent, and I dare
Trust him my soul in sleep.

Guen. How could you let us
E'en talk to you about Lord Mertoun then ?

Mil. There is a cloud around me.

Guen. But you said
You would receive his suit in spite of this ?

Mil. I say there is a cloud . . .

Guen. No cloud to me !
Lord Mertoun and your lover are the same !

Mil. What maddest fancy . . .

Guen. [calling aloud.] Austin ! (Spare your pains—
When I have got a truth, that truth I keep)—

Mil. By all you love, sweet Guendolen, forbear !
Have I confided in you . . .

Guen. Just for this !
Austin !—Oh, not to guess it at the first !
But I did guess it—that is, I divined—
Felt by an instinct how it was—why else
Should I pronounce you free from all that heap
Of sins which had been irredeemable ?
I felt they were not yours—what other way

[AUSTIN goes.]

Than this, not yours ? The secret's wholly mine !

Mil. If you would see me die before his face . . .

Guen. I'd hold my peace ! And if the Earl returns
To-night ?

Mil. Ah, Heaven, he's lost !

Guen. I thought so ! Austin !

Enter AUSTIN.

Oh, where have you been hiding ?

Aus. Thorold's gone,

I know not how, across the meadow-land.
I watched him till I lost him in the skirts
Of the beech-wood.

Guen. Gone ? All thwarts us !

Mil. Thorold too ?

Guen. I have thought. First lead this Mildred to her room.
Go on the other side : and then we'll seek
Your brother ; and I'll tell you, by the way,
The greatest comfort in the world. You said
There was a clew to all. Remember, sweet,
He said there was a clew ! I hold it. Come !

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The end of the Yew-tree Avenue under MILDRED's window. A light seen through a central red pane.*

Enter TRESHAM through the trees.

Again here ! But I cannot lose myself.
The heath—the orchard—I have traversed glades
And dells and bosky paths which used to lead
Into green wild-wood depths, bewildering
My boy's adventurous step ; and now they tend
Hither or soon or late ; the blackest shade
Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees ope wide,
And the dim turret I have fled from fronts
Again my step ; the very river put
Its arm about me and conducted me
To this detested spot. Why, then, I'll shun
Their will no longer—do your will with me !
Oh, bitter ! To have reared a towering scheme
Of happiness, and to behold it razed,
Were nothing : all men hope, and see their hopes

Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope anew :
 But I . . . to hope that from a line like ours
 No horrid prodigy like this would spring,
 Were just as though I hoped that from these old
 Confederates against the sovereign day,
 Children of older and yet older sires
 (Whose living coral berries dropped, as now
 On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,
 On many a beauty's wimple) would proceed
 No poison-tree, to thrust, from Hell its root,
 Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.
 Why came I here ? What must I do ?—[*a bell strikes.*]—A
 bell ?

Midnight ! and 'tis at midnight . . . Ah, I catch
 —Woods, river, plains, I catch your meaning now,
 And I obey you ! Hist ! This tree will serve !

[*He retires behind one of the trees. After a pause, enter MERTOUN cloaked as before.*

Mer. Not time ! Beat out thy last voluptuous beat
 Of hope and fear, my heart ! I thought the clock
 In the chapel struck as I was pushing thro'
 The ferns. And so I shall no more see rise
 My love-star ! Oh, no matter for the past ! .
 So much the more delicious task to see
 Mildred revive : to pluck out, thorn by thorn,
 All traces of the rough forbidden path
 My rash love lured her to ! Each day must see
 Some fear of hers effaced, some hope renewed !
 Then there will be surprises, unforeseen
 Delights in store. I 'll not regret the past !

[*The light is placed above in the purple pane.*
 And see, my signal rises ! Mildred's star !
 I never saw it lovelier than now
 It rises for the last time ! If it sets,
 'Tis that the re-assuring sun may dawn !

[*As he prepares to ascend the last tree of the avenue.*
TRESHAM arrests his arm.

Unhand me—peasant, by your grasp ! Here's gold.
 'Twas a mad freak of mine. I said I 'd pluck
 A branch from the white-blossomed shrub beneath
 The casement there ! Take this, and hold your peace.

Tresh. Into the moonlight yonder, come with me !
 —Out of the shadow !

Mer. I am armed, fool !

Tresh. Yes,

Or no ?—You 'll come into the light, or no ?

My hand is on your throat—refuse !—

Mer That voice !

Where have I heard . . no—that was mild and slow.
 I'll come with you ! {*They advance.*
Tresh. You're armed—that's well.
 Your name—who are you ?

Mer. (Tresham !—she is lost !)
Tresh. Oh, silent ? Do you know, you bear yourself
 Exactly as, in curious dreams I've had
 How felons, this wild earth is full of, look
 When they're detected, still your kind has looked !
 The bravo holds an assured countenance,
 The thief is voluble and plausible,
 But silently the slave of lust has crouched
 When I have fancied it before a man !
 Your name ?

Mer. I do conjure Lord Tresham—ay,
 Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail—
 That he for his own sake forbear to ask
 My name ! As Heaven's above, his future weal
 Or woe depends upon my silence ! Vain !
 I read your white inexorable face !
 Know me, Lord Tresham ! [He throws off his disguises.]

Tresh. Mertoun ! [After a pause.] Draw now !
Mer. Hear me
 But speak first !

Tresh. Not one least word on your life !
 Be sure that I will strangle in your throat
 The least word that informs me how you live
 And yet seem what you seem ! No doubt 'twas you
 Taught Mildred still to keep that face and sin !
 We should join hands in frantic sympathy
 If you once taught me the unteachable,
 Explained how you can live so, and so lie !
 With God's help I retain, despite my sense,
 The old belief—a life like yours is still
 Impossible ! Now draw !

Mer. Not for my sake,
 Do I entreat a hearing—for your sake,
 And most, for her sake !

Tresh. Ha, ha ! what should I
 Know of your ways ? A miscreant like yourself,
 How must one rouse his ire ?—A blow ?—that's pride,
 No doubt, to him ! one spurns him, does one not ?
 Or sets the foot upon his mouth—or spits
 Into his face ! Come—which, or all of these ?

Mer. Twixt him, and me, and Mildred, Heaven be judge !
 Can I avoid this ? Have your will, my Lord !

[He draws, and, after a few passes, falls.]

Tresh. You are not hurt ?

Mer. You 'll hear me now !

Tresh.

But rise !

Mer. Ah, Tresham, say I not " you 'll hear me now ! "

And what procures a man the right to speak

In his defence before his fellow-man,

But—I suppose—the thought that presently

He may have leave to speak before his God

His whole defence ?

Tresh. Not hurt ? It cannot be !

You made no effort to resist me. Where

Did my sword reach you ? Why not have returned

My thrusts ? Hurt where ?

Mer. My lord—

Tresh. How young he is !

Mer. Lord Tresham, I am very young, and yet

I have entangled other lives with mine.

Do let me speak—and do believe my speech,

That when I die before you presently,—

Tresh. Can you stay here till I return with help ?

Mer. Oh, stay by me ! When I was less than boy

I did you grievous wrong, and knew it not—

Upon my honour, knew it not ! Once known,

I could not find what seemed a better way

To right you than I took : my life—you feel

How less than nothing had been giving you

The life you 've taken ! But I thought my way

The better—only for your sake and hers.

And as you have decided otherwise,

Would I had an infinity of lives

To offer you !—now say—instruct me—think !

Can you from out the minutes I have left

Eke out my reparation ? Oh—think—think !

For I must wring a partial—dare I say,

Forgiveness from you, ere I die ?

Tresh. I do

Forgive you.

Mer. Wait and ponder that great word !

Because, if you forgive me, I shall hope

To speak to you of—Mildred !

Tresh. Mertoun,—hasto

And anger have undone us. 'Tis not you

Should tell me for a novelty you 're young—

Thoughtless—unable to recall the past !

Be but your pard'n' ample as my own !

Mer. Ah, Tresham, that a sword-stroke and a drop

Of blood or two, should bring all this about !

Why, 'twas my very fear of you—my love

Of you—(what passion 's like a boy's for one
 Like you ?)—that ruined me ! I dreamed of you—
 You, all accomplished, courted everywhere,
 The scholar and the gentleman. I burned
 To knit myself to you—but I was young,
 And your surpassing reputation kept me
 So far aloof—oh, wherefore all that love ?
 With less of love, my glorious yesterday
 Of praise and gentle words and kindest looks,
 Had taken place perchance six months ago !
 Even now—how happy we had been ! And yet
 I know the thought of this escaped you, Tresham !
 Let me look up into your face-- I feel
 'Tis changed above me—yet my eyes are glazed.
 Where ? where ?

[As he endeavours to raise himself, his eye catches the lamp.]

Ah, Mildred ! What will Mildred do ?

Tresham, her life is bound up in the life
 That 's bleeding fast away !—I 'll live—must live,
 There ! if you 'll only turn me I shall live
 And save her ! Tresham—oh, had you but heard !
 Had you but heard ! What right have you to set
 The thoughtless foot upon her life and mine,
 And then say, as we perish, "Had I thought,
 " All had gone otherwise" ? We 've sinned and die :
 Never you sin, Lord Tresham !—for you 'll die,
 And God will judge you.

Tresh. Yes, be satisfied—
 That process is begun.

Mer. And she sits there
 Waiting for me. Now, say you this to her--
 You—not another—say, I saw him die
 As he breathed this—"I love her"—(you don't know
 What those three small words mean) say, loving her
 Lowers me down the bloody slope to death
 With memories . . . I speak to her—not you,
 Who had no pity—will have no remorse,
 Perchance intend her . . . Die along with me,
 Dear Mildred !—'tis so easy—and you 'll 'scape
 So much unkindness ! Can I lie at rest,
 With rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds
 Done to you—heartless men to have my heart,
 And I tied down with grave-clothes and the worm,
 Aware, perhaps, of every blow—O God !—
 Upon those lips—yet of no power to tear
 The felon stripe by stripe ? Die, Mildred ! Leave
 Their honourable world to them—for God

We're good enough, tho' the world casts us out !

[*A whistle is heard.*

Tresh. Ho, Gerard !

Enter GERARD, AUSTIN, and GUENDOLEN, with lights.

No one speak ! you see what's done !

I cannot bear another voice !

Mer. There's light—

Light all about me and I move to it.

Tresham, did I not tell you—did you not

Just promise to deliver words of mine

To Mildred ?

Tresh. I will bear those words to her.

Mer. Now ?

Tresh. Now ! Lift you the body, Gerard, and leave me
The head.

[*As they half-raised MERTOUN, he turns suddenly.*

Mer. I knew they turned me—turn me not from her !

There ! stay you ! there !

[*Dics.*

Guen. [after a pause.] Austin, remain you here

With Thorold until Gerard comes with help—

Then lead him to his chamber. I must go

To Mildred.

Tresh. Guendolen, I hear each word
You utter—did you hear him bid me give
His message ? Did you hear my promise ? I,
And only I, see Mildred !

Guen. She will die.

Tresh. Oh no, she will not die ! I dare not hope
She'll die. What ground have you to think she'll die ?
Why, Austin's with you !

Aus. Had we but arrived
Before you fought !

Tresh. There was no fight at all !
He let me slaughter him—the boy !—I'll trust
The body there to you and Gerard—thus !
Now bear him on before me.

Aus. Whither bear him ?

Tresh. Oh, to my chamber. When we meet there next,
We shall be friends. [*They bear out the body of MERTOUN.*

Will she die, Guendolen ?

Guen. Where are you taking me ?

Tresh. He fell just here !
Now answer me. Shall you in your whole life
—You who have nought to do with Mertoun's fate,
Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,
Shall you e'er walk this way if you can help ?
When you and Austin wander arm-in-arm

Thro' our ancestral grounds, will not a shade
 Be ever on the meadow and the waste—
 Another kind of shade than when the night
 Shuts the woodside with all its whispers up !
 But will you ever so forget his breast
 As willingly to cross this bloody turf
 Under the black yew avenue ? That's well !
 You turn your head ! and I then ? —

Guen. What is done
 Is done ! My care is for the living. Thorold,
 Bear up against this burthen—more remains
 To set the neck to !

Tresh. Dear and ancient trees
 My fathers planted, and I loved so well !
 What have I done that, like some fabled crime
 Of yore, lets loose a fury leading thus
 Her miserable dance amidst you all ?
 Oh, never more for me shall winds intone
 With all your tops a vast antiphony,
 Demanding and responding in God's praise !
 Hers ye are now—not mine ! Farewell—Farewell !

SCENE II.—MILDRED's Chamber. MILDRED alone.

He comes not ! I have heard of those who seemed
 Resourceless in prosperity,—you thought
 Sorrow might slay them when she listed—yet
 Did they so gather up their diffused strength
 At her first menace, that they bade her strike,
 And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to scorn.
 Oh, 'tis not so with me ! the first woe fell,
 And the rest fall upon it, not on me :
 Else should I bear that Henry comes not ?—fails
 Just this first night out of so many nights ?
 Loving is done with ! Were he sitting now,
 As so few hours since, on that seat, we'd love
 No more—contrive no thousand happy ways
 To hide love from the loveless, any more !
 I think I might have urged some little point
 In my defence, to Thorold ; he was breathless
 For the least hint of a defence ; but no !
 The first shame over, all that would might fall.
 No Henry ! Yet I merely sit and think
 The morn's deed o'er and o'er. I must have crept

Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost
 Her lover—oh, I dare not look upon
 Such woe! I crouch away from it! 'Tis she,
 Mildred, will break her heart, not I! The world
 Forsakes me—only Henry's left me—left?
 When I have lost him, for he does not come,
 And I sit stupidly . . . Oh, Heaven, break up,
 This worse than anguish, this mad apathy,
 By any means or any messenger!

Tresh. [without.] Mildred!

Mil. Come in! Heaven hears me!
 [TRESHAM enters.] You? alone?

Oh, no more cursing!

Tresh. Mildred, I must sit.
 There—you sit!

Mil. Say it, Thorold—do not look
 The curse—deliver all you come to say!
 What must become of me? Oh, speak that thought
 Which makes your brow and cheek so pale!

Tresh. My thought?

Mil. All of it!

Tresh. How we waded—years ago—
 After those water-lilies, till the splash,
 I know not how, surprised us; and you dared
 Neither advance nor turn back, so we stood
 Laughing and crying until Gerard came—
 Once safe upon the turf, the loudest, too,
 For once more reaching the relinquished prize!
 How idle thoughts are—some men's—dying men's!
 Mildred,—

Mil. You call me kindlier by my name
 Than even yesterday—what is in that?

Tresh. It weighs so much upon my mind that I
 This morning took an office not my own!
 I might . . . of course I must be glad or grieved,
 Content or not, at every little thing
 That touches you—I may with a wrung heart
 Even reprove you, Mildred; I did more—
 Will you forgive me?

Mil. Thorold? do you mock? . . .
 Or no . . . and yet you bid me . . . say that word!

Tresh. Forgive me, Mildred!—are you silent, sweet?
Mil. [starting up.] Why does not Henry Mertoun come to
 night?

Are you, too, silent?

[Dashing his mantle aside and pointing to his scab-
 bard, which is empty.]

Ah, this speaks for you!

You've murdered Henry Mertoun ! now proceed !
 What is it I must pardon ? This and all ?
 Well, I do pardon you—I think I do.
 Thorold, how very wretched you must be !

Tresh. He bade me tell you . . .

Mil. What I do forbid
 Your utterance of ! so much that you may tell
 And will not—how you murdered him . . . but, no !
 You'll tell me that he loved me, never more
 Than bleeding out his life there—must I say
 "Indeed," to that ? Enough ! I pardon you !

Tresh. You cannot, Mildred ! for the harsh words, yes :
 Of this last deed Another's Judge—whose doom
 I wait in doubt, despondency, and fear.

Mil. Oh true ! there's nought for me to pardon ! True !
 You loosed my soul of all its cares at once—
 Death makes me sure of him for ever ! You
 Tell me his last words ? *He* shall tell me them,
 And take my answer—not in words, but reading
 Himself the heart I had to read him late,
 Which death . . .

Tresh. Death ? you are dying too ? Well said
 Of Guendolen ! I dared not hope you'd die—
 But she was sure of it.

Mil. Tell Guendolen
 I loved her, and tell Austin . . .

Tresh. . . . Him you loved—
 And me ?

Mil. Ah, Thorold ! was't not rashly done
 To quench that blood, on fire with youth and hope
 And love of me, whom you loved too, and yet
 Suffered to sit here waiting his approach
 While you were slaying him ? Oh, doubtlessly
 You let him speak his poor confused boy's speech
 —Do his poor utmost to disarm your wrath
 And respite me !—you let him try to give
 The story of our loves, and ignorance,
 And the brief madness, and the long despair—
 You let him plead all this, because your code
 Of honour bids you hear before you strike :
 But at the end, as he looked up for life
 Into your eyes—you struck him down !

Tresh. No ! no !
 Had I but heard him—had I let him speak
 Half the truth—less—had I looked long on him,
 I had desisted ! Why, as he lay there,
 The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered all
 The story ere he told it ! I saw thro'

The troubled surface of his crime and yours
 A depth of purity immovable !
 Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest,
 Had gleamed some inlet to the calm beneath !
 I would not glance—my punishment's at hand.
 There, Mildred, is the truth ! and you—say on—
 You curse me ?

Mil. As I dare approach that Heaven
 Which has not bade a living thing despair,
 Which needs no code to keep its grace from stain,
 But bids the vilest worm that turns on it
 Desist and be forgiven,—I—forgive not,
 But bless you, Thorold from my soul of souls !

[Falls on his neck.]
 There ! do not think too much upon the past !
 The cloud that's broke was all the same a cloud
 While it stood up between my friend and you !
 You hurt him 'neath its shadow—but is that
 So past retrieve ? I have his heart, you know—
 I may dispose of it—I give it you !
 It loves you as mine loves ! Confirm me, Henry !

[Dies.]

Tresh. I wish thee joy, beloved ! I am glad
 In thy full gladness !

Guen. [without.] Mildred ! Tresham !
 [Entering with AUSTIN.] Thorold,
 I could desist no longer. Ah, she swoons !
 That's well—

Tresh. Oh ! better far than that !
Guen. She's dead !

Let me unlock her arms !

Tresh. She threw them thus
 About my neck and blessed me, and then died.
 —You'll let them stay now, Guendolen !

Aus. Leave her
 And look to him ! What ails you, Thorold ?

Guen. White
 As she—and whiter ! Austin—quick—this side !

Aus. A froth is oozing thro' his clenched teeth—
 Both lips, where they're not bitten thro', are black !
 Speak, dearest Thorold !

Tresh. Something does weigh down
 My neck beside her weight : thanks : I should fall
 But for you, Austin, I believe !—there, there—
 'Twill pass away soon !—ah,—I had forgotten—
 I am dying.

Guen. Thorold—Thorold—why was this ?

Tresh. I said, just as I drank the poison off,

The earth would be no longer earth to me,
The life out of all life was gone from me !
There are blind ways provided, the foredone
Heart-weary player in this pageant-world
Drops out by, letting the main masque defile
By the conspicuous portal :—I am through—
Just through !—

Guen. Don't leave him, Austin ! death is close.

Tresh. Already Mildred's face is peacefuller !

I see you, Austin—feel you—here's my hand,
Put yours in it—You, Guendolen, yours too !
You're Lord and Lady now—You're Treshams—Name
And fame are yours— You hold our 'Scutcheon up.
Austin, no Blot on it ! You see how blood
Must wash one blot away : the first blot came
And the first blood came. To the vain world's eye
All's gules again— no care to the vain world,
From whence the red was drawn !

Aus. No blot shall come !

Tresh. I said that—yet it did come. Should it come,
Vengeance is God's not man's. Remember me ! [Dies.
Guen. [letting fall the pulseless arm.] Ah, Thorold, we can
but—remember you !

THE
RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

A Tragedy.

THE
RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

PERSONS.

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| The Grand-Master's Prefect. | Initiated Druses—ANAEL. |
| The Patriarch's Nuncio. | " " MAANI. |
| The Republic's Admiral. | " " KARSHOOK, |
| LOYS DE DREUX, Knight-Novice. | RAGHIB, AYOOB, and others. |
| Initiated Druses—DJABAL. | Uninitiated Druses. |
| " " KHALIL. | Prefect's Guard, Nuncio's Attendants, Admiral's Force. |

TIME, 14—.

PLACE, An Islet of the Southern Sporades, colonised by Druses of Lebanon, and garrisoned by the Knights-Hospitallers of Rhodes.

SCENE—A Hall in the Prefect's Palace.

ACT I.

Enter stealthily KARSHOOK, RAGHIB, AYOOB, and other initiated Druses, each as he enters casting off a robe that conceals his distinctive black vest and white turban; then, as giving a loose to exultation,—

Kar. The moon is carried off in purple fire :
Day breaks at last ! Break glory, with the day,
On Djabal's dread incarnate mystery
Now ready to resume its pristine shape
Of Hakeem, as the Khalif vanished erst
In what seemed death to uninstructed eyes,
On red Mokattam's verge—our Founder's flesh,
As he resumes our Founder's function !

Ragh. —Death
Sweep to the Christian Prefect that enslaved
So long us sad Druse exiles o'er the sea !
Ay. —Most joy be thine, O Mother-mount ! Thy brood
Returns to thee, no outcasts as we left,
But thus—but thus ! Behind, our Prefect's corse ;
Before, a presence like the morning—thine,
Absolute Djabal late,—God Hakeem now
That day breaks !

Kar. Off, then, with disguise at last !
As from our forms this hateful garb we strip,
Lose every tongue its glozing accent too,
Discard each limb the ignoble gesture ! Cry,
'Tis the Druse Nation, warders on our mount
Of the world's secret, since the birth of time,
—No kindred slips, no offsets from thy stock,
No spawn of Christians are we, Prefect, we
Who rise . . .

Ay. Who shout . . .
Ragh. Who seize, a first-fruits, ha—
Spoil of the spoiler ! Brave !
[They begin to tear down and to dispute for the decorations of the Hall.]

Kar. Hold !
Ay. —Mine, I say
And mine shall it continue !
Kar. Just this fringe !
Take anything beside ! Lo, spire on spire,
Curl serpentwise wretched columns to the top
Of the roof, and hide themselves mysteriously
Among the twinkling lights and darks that haunt
Yon cornice ! Where the huge veil, they suspend
Before the Prefect's Chamber of delight,
Floats wide, then falls again (as if its slave,
The scented air, took heart now, and anon
Lost heart, to buoy its breadths of gorgeousness
Above the gloom they droop in)—all the porch
Is jewelled o'er with frost-work charactery ;
And see yon eight-point cross of white flame, winking
Hoar-silvery like some fresh-broke marble-stone :
Raze out the Rhodian's Cross there, so thou leav'st me
This single fringe !

Ay. Ha ! wouldst thou, dog-fox ? Help
—Three handbreadths of gold fringe, my son was set
To twist, the night he died !

Kar. Nay, hear the knave !
And I could witness my one daughter borne,
A week since, to the Prefect's couch, yet fold

These arms, be mute, lest word of mine should mar
 Our Master's work, delay the Prefect here
 A day, prevent his sailing hence for Rhodes—
 How knew I else?—Hear me denied my right
 By such a knave!

Ragh. [interposing.] Each ravage for himself!
 Booty enough! On, Druses! Be there found
 Blood and a heap behind us; with us, Djabal
 Turned Hakeem; and before us, Lebanon!
 Yields the porch? Spare not! There his minions dragged
 Thy daughter, Karshook, to the Prefect's couch!
 Ayoob! Thy son, to soothe the Prefect's pride,
 Bent o'er that task, the death-sweat on his brow,
 Carving the spice-tree's heart in scroll-work there!
 Onward in Djabal's name!

As the tumult is at height, enter KHALIL A pause and silence.

Kha. Was it for this,
 Djabal hath summoned you? Deserve you thus
 A portion in to-day's event? What, here—
 When most behoves your feet fall soft, your eyes
 Sink low, your tongues lie still,—at Djabal's side,
 Close in his very hearing, who, perchance,
 Assumes e'en now God Hakeem's dreaded shape,—
 Dispute you for these gauds?

Ay. How say'st thou, Khalil?
 Doubtless our Master prompts thee! Take the fringe,
 Old Karshook! I supposed it was a day . . .

Kha. For pillage?
Kar. Hearken, Khalil! Never spoke
 A boy so like a song-bird; we avouch thee
 Prettiest of all our Master's instruments
 Except thy bright twin-sister—thou and Anael
 Challenge his prinnie regard: but we may crave
 (Such nothings as we be) a portion too
 Of Djabal's favour; in him we believed.
 His bound ourselves, him moon by moon obeyed,
 Kept silence till this daybreak—so may claim
 Reward: who grudges me my claim?

Ay. To-day
 Is not as yesterday!
Ragh. Stand off!
Kha. Rebel you?
 Must I, the delegate of Djabal, draw
 His wrath on you, the day of our Return?
Other Druses. Wrench from their grasp the fringe!
 Hound! must the earth

Vomit her plagues on us thro' thee ?—and thee ?
Plague me not, Khalil, for their fault !

Kha.

Oh, shame !

Thus breaks to-day on you, the mystic tribe
Who, flying the approach of Osman, bore
Our faith, a merest spark, from Syria, Ridge,
Its birthplace, hither ! Let the sea divide
These hunters from their prey, you said, and safe
In this dim islet's virgin solitude
Tend we our faith, the spark, till happier time
Fan it to fire ; till Hakeem rise again,
According to his word that, in the flesh
Which faded on Mokattam ages since,
He, at our extreme need, would interpose,
And, reinstating all in power and bliss,
Lead us himself to Lebanon once more.
Wasn't not thus you departed years ago,
Ere I was born ?

Druses. 'Twas even thus, years ago.

Kha. And did you call—(according to old laws
Which bid us, lest the Sacred grow Prophane,
Assimilate ourselves in outward rites
With strangers fortune makes our lords, and live
As Christian with the Christian, Jew with Jew,
Druse only with the Druses)—did you call
Or no, to stand 'twixt you and Osman's rage,
(Mad to pursue e'en hither thro' the sea
The remnant of your tribe) a race self-vowed
To endless warfare with his hordes and him,
The White-cross Knights of the adjacent Isle ?

Kar. And why else rend we down, wrench up, raze out ?
These Knights of Rhodes we thus solicited
For help, bestowed on us a fiercer pest
Than aught we fled—their Prefect ; who began
His promised mere paternal governance,
By a prompt massacre of all our Sheikhs
Able to thwart the Order in its scheme
Of crushing, with our nationalities,
Each chance of our return, and taming us
Bond slaves to Rhodes for ever—all, he thinks
To end by this day's treason.

Kha. Say I not ?

You, fitted to the Order's purposes,
Your Sheikhs cut off, your very garb proscribed,
Must yet receive one degradation more ;
The Knights at last throw off the mask—transfer,
As tributary now, and appanage,
This islet they are but protectors of,

To their own ever-craving lord, the Church,
 Which licenses all crimes that pay it thus—
 You, from their Prefect, were to be consigned
 Pursuant to I know not what vile pact,
 To the Knights' Patriarch, ardent to outvie
 His predecessor in all wickedness ;
 When suddenly rose Djabal in the midst,
 Djabal, the man, in semblance, but our God
 Confessed by signs and portents. Ye saw fire
 Bicker round Djabal, heard strange music flit
 Bird-like about his brow ?

Druses. We saw—we heard !
 Djabal is Hakecem, the incarnate Dread,
 The phantasmi Khalif, King of Prodigies !

Kha. And as he said hath not our Khalif done,
 And so disposed events (from land to land
 Passing invisibly) that when, this morn,
 The pact of villainy complete, there comes
 This Patriarch's Nuncio with this Master's Prefect
 Their treason to consummate,—each will face
 For a crouching handful, an uplifted nation ;
 For simulated Christians, confessed Druses ;
 And, for slaves past hope of the Mother-mount,
 Freedmen returning there 'neath Venice's flag ;
 That Venice, which, the Hospitallers' foe,
 Grants us from Candia escort home at price
 Of our relinquished isle—Rhodes counts her own—
 Venice, whose promised argosies should stand
 Toward the harbour : is it now that you, and you,
 And you, selected from the rest to bear
 The burthen of the Khalif's secret, further
 To-day's event, entitled by your wrongs,
 And witness in the Prefect's hall his fate—
 That you dare clutch these gauds ? Ay, drop them !

Kar. True,
 Most true, all this ; and yet, may one dare hint,
 Thou art the youngest of us ?—tho' employed
 Abundantly as Djabal's confidant,
 Transmitter of his mandates, even now :
 Much less, whene'er beside him Anael graces
 The cedar throne, his Queen-bride, art thou like
 To occupy its lowest step that day ?
 Now, Khalil, wert thou checked as thou aspirest,
 Forbidden such or such an honour,—say,
 Would silence serve so amply ?

Kha. Karshook thinks
 I covet honours ? Well, nor idly thinks !

Honours? I have demanded of them all
The greatest!

Kar. I supposed so.

Kha. Judge yourselves!

Turn—thus: 'tis in the alcove at the back
Of yonder columned porch, whose entrance now
The veil hides, that our Prefect holds his state;
Receives the Nuncio, when the one, from Rhodes,
The other lands from Syria; there they meet.

Now, I have sued with earnest prayers . . .

Kar. For what

Shall the Bride's brother vainly sue?

Kha. That mine—

Avenging in one blow a myriad wrongs,
—Might be the hand to slay the Prefect there!

Djabal reserves that office for himself. [A silence.]

Thus far, as youngest of you all, I speak

—Scarce more enlightened than yourselves: since, near

As I approach him, nearer as I trust

Soon to approach our Master, he reveals

Only the God's power, not the glory yet:

Therefore I reasoned with you: now, as servant

To Djabal, bearing his authority,

Hear me appoint your several posts! Till noon

None sees him save myself and Annel—once

The deed achieved, our Khalif, casting off

The embodied Awe's tremendous mystery,

The weakness of the flesh disguise, resumes

His proper glory, ne'er to fade again.

Enter a Druse.

The Druse. Our Prefect lands from Rhodes!—Without a sign
That he suspects aught since he left our Isle;
Nor in his train a single guard beyond
The few he sailed with hence: so have we learned
From Loys . . .

Kar. Loys? Is not Loys gone
For ever?

Ayoob. Loys, the Frank Knight, returned?

The Druse. Loys, the boy, stood on the leading prow
Conspicuous in his gay attire,—and leapt
Into the surf the foremost: since day-dawn
I kept watch to the Northward; take but note
Of my poor vigilance to Djabal!

Kha. Peace!
Thou, Karshook, with thy company, receive
The Prefect as appointed: see, all keep

The wonted show of servitude : announced
 His entry here by the accustomed peal
 Of trumpets, then await the further pleasure
 Of Djabal ! (Loys back, whom Djabal sent
 To Rhodes that we might spare the single Knight
 Worth sparing !)

Enter a second Druse.

The Druse. I espied it first ! Say, I
 First spied the Nuncio's galley from the South !
 Saidst thou a Crossed-keys' Flag would flap the mast ?
 It nears apace ! One galley and no more—
 If Djabal chance to ask who spied the flag,
 Forget not, I it was !

Kha. Thou, Ayoob, bring
 The Nuncio and his followers hither ! Break
 One rule prescribed, ye wither in your blood,
 Die at your fault !

Enter a third Druse.

The Druse. I shall see home, see home !
 —Shall banquet in the sombre groves again !
 Hail to thee, Khalil ! Venice looms afar ;
 The argosies of Venice, like a cloud,
 Bear up from Candia in the distance !

Kha. Joy !
 Summon our people, Raghib ! Bid all forth !
 Tell them the long-kept secret, old and young !
 Set free the captives, let the trampled raise
 Their faces from the dust, because at length
 The cycle is complete, God Hakeem's reign
 Begins anew ! Say, Venice for our guard,
 Ere night we steer for Syria ! Hear you, Druses ?
 Hear you this crowning witness to the claims
 Of Djabal ? Oh, I spoke of hope and fear,
 Reward and punishment, because he bade
 Who has the right ; for me, what should I say
 But, mar not those imperial lineaments,
 No majesty of all that rapt regard
 Vex by the least omission ! Let him rise
 Without a check from you !

Druses. Let Djabal rise !

Enter Loys.—The Druses are silent.

Loys. Who speaks of Djabal ?—for I seek him, friends !
 [Aside.] *Tu Dieu !* 'Tis as our Isle broke out in song
 For joy, its Prefect-incubus drops off
 To-day, and I succeed him in his rule !

But no—they cannot dream of their good fortune !

[*Aloud.*] Peace to you, Druses ! I have tidings for you,
But first for Djabal : where's your tall bewitcher,
With that small Arab thin-lipped silver mouth ?

Kha. [*Aside to KAR.*] Loys, in truth ! Yet Djabal cannot err !

Kar. [*to KHA.*] And who takes charge of Loys ? That's forgotten,

Despite thy wariness ! Will Loys stand
And see his comrade slaughtered ?

Loys. [*Aside.*] How they shrink
And whisper, with those rapid faces ! What ?
The sight of me in their oppressors' garb
Strikes terror to the simple tribe ? God's shame
On those that bring our order ill repute !
But all's at end now ; better days begin
For these mild mountaineers from over-sea ;
The timidest shall have in me no Prefect
To cower at thus ! [*Aloud.*] I asked for Djabal—

Kar. [*Aside.*] Better
One lured him, ere he can suspect, inside
The corridor ; 'twere easy to despatch
A youngster. [*To Loys.*] Djabal passed some minutes since
Thro' yonder porch, and . . .

Kha. [*Aside.*] Hold ! What, him despatch ?
The only Christian of them all we charge
No tyranny upon ? Who,—noblest Knight
Of all that learned from time to time their trade
Of lust and cruelty among us,—heir
To Europe's pomps, a truest child of pride,—
Yet stood between the Prefect and ourselves
From the beginning ? Loys, Djabal makes
Account of, and precisely sent to Rhodes
For safety ?—I take charge of him !

[*To Loys.*] Sir Loys,—

Loys. There, cousins ! Does Sir Loys strike you dead ?

Kha. [*advancing.*] Djabal has intercourse with few or none
Till noon tide : but, your pleasure ?

Loys. “ Intercourse

“ With few or none ? ”—(Ah, Khalil, when you spoke
I saw not your smooth face ! All health !—and health
To Anael ! How fares Anael ?)—“ Intercourse
“ With few or none ? ” Forget you, I've been friendly
With Djabal long ere you or any Druse ?

—Enough of him at Rennes, I think, beneath
The Duke my father's roof ! He'd tell by the hour,
With fixed white eyes beneath his swarthy brow,
Plausiblest stories . . .

- Kha.* Stories, say you?—Ah,
The quaint attire!
- Loys.* My dress for the last time!
How sad I cannot make you understand,
This ermine, o'er a shield, betokens me
Of Bretagne, ancientest of provinces
And noblest; and, what's best and oldest there,
See, Dreux', our house's blazon, which the Nuncio
Tacks to an Hospitallers' vest to-day!
- Kha.* The Nuncio we await? What brings you back
From Rhodes, Sir Loys?
- Loys.* How you island tribe
Forget, the world's awake while here you drowse!
What brings me back? What should not bring me, rather?
Our Patriarch's Nuncio visits you to-day—
Is not my year's probation out? I come
To take the knightly vows.
- Kha.* What's that you wear?
- Loys.* This Rhodian cross? The cross your Prefect wore.
You should have seen, as I saw, the full Chapter
Rise, to a man, while they transferred this cross
From that unworthy Prefect's neck to . . . (fool—
My secret will escape me!) In a word,
My year's probation's passed, and Knight ere eve
Am I; bound, like the rest, to yield my wealth
To the common stock, to live in chastity,
(We Knights espouse alone our Order's fame)
—Change this gay weed for the black white-crossed gown,
And fight to death against the Infidel
—Not, therefore, against you, you Christians with
Such partial difference only as befits
The peacefullest of tribes! But Khalil, prithee,
Is not the Isle brighter than wont to-day?
- Kha.* Ah, the new sword!
- Loys.* See now! You handle sword
As 'twere a camel-staff! Pull! That's my motto,
Anncaled, "*Pro fide*," on the blade in blue,
- Kha.* No curve in it? Surely a blade should curve!
- Loys.* Straight from the wrist! Loose—it should poise
itself!
- Kha.* [waving with irrepressible exultation the sword.] We
are a nation, Loys, of old fame
Among the mountains! Rights have we to keep
With the sword too!
- [Remembering himself.] But I forget—you bid me
Seck Djabal?
- Loys.* What! A sword's sight scares you not?
(The People I will make of him and them!)

Oh, let my Prefect-sway begin at once !)

Bring Djabal—say, indeed, that come he must !

Kha. At noon seek Djabal in the Prefect's Chamber,
And find—[*Aside.*] Nay, 'tis thy cursed race's token,

Frank pride, no special insolence of thine !

[*Aloud.*] Tarry and I will do your bidding, Loys.

[*To the rest aside.*] Now, forth you ! I proceed to Djabal straight.

Leave this poor boy, who knows not what he says.

Oh, will it not add joy to even thy joy,

Djabal, that I report all friends were true ?

[*KHALIL goes, followed by the Druses.*

Loys. Tu Dieu ! How happy I shall make these Druses !

Was 't not surpassingly contrived of me

To get the long list of their wrongs by heart,

Then take the first pretence for stealing off

From these poor islanders, present myself

Sudden at Rhodes before the noble Chapter,

And (as best proof of ardour in its cause

Which ere to-night will have become, too, mine)

Acquaint it with this plague-sore in its body,

This Prefect and his villainous career ?

The princely Synod ! All I dared request

Was his dismissal ; and they graciously

Consigned his very office to myself—

Myself may heal whate'er 's diseased !

And good

For them they did so ! Since I never felt

How lone a lot, tho' brilliant, I embrace,

Till now that, past retrieval, it is mine—

To live thus, and thus die ! Yet, as I leapt

On shore, so home a feeling greeted me

That I could half-believe in Djabal's story,

He used to tempt my father with, at Rennes—

And me, too, since the story brought me here—

Of some Count Dreux and ancestor of ours

Who, sick of wandering from Bouillon's war,

Left his old name in Lebanon.

Long days

At least to spend in the Isle ! and, my news known

An hour hence, what if Anael turns on me

The great black eyes I must forget ?

Why, fool,

Recall them, then ? My business is with Djabal,

Not Anael ! Djabal tarries : if I seek him ?—

The Isle is brighter than its wont to-day !

ACT II.

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. That a strong man should think himself a God !
 I—Hakeem ? To have wandered thro' the world,
 Sown falsehood, and thence reaped now scorn, now faith,
 For my one chant with many a change, my tale
 Of outrage, and my prayer for vengeance—this
 Required, forsooth, no mere man's faculty,
 Nor less than Hakeem's ? The persuading Loys
 To pass probation here ; the getting access
 By Loys to the Prefect ; worst of all,
 The gaining my tribe's confidence by fraud
 That would disgrace the very Franks.—a few
 Of Europe's secrets that subdue the flame,
 The wave,—to ply a simple tribe with these,
 Took Hakeem ?

And I feel this first to-day !
 Does the day break, is the hour imminent
 When one deed, when my whole life's deed, my deed
 Must be accomplished ? Hakeem ? Why the God ?
 Shout, rather, " Djabal, Youssof's child, thought slain
 " With his whole race, the Druses' Sheikhs, this Prefect
 " Endeavoured to extirpate—saved, a child,
 " Returns from traversing the world, a man,
 " Able to take revenge, lead back the march
 " To Lebanon"—so shout, and who gainsays ?
 But now, because delusion mixed itself
 Insensibly with this career, all's changed !
 Have I brought Venice to afford us convoy ?
 " True—but my jugglings wrought that ! " Put I heart
 Into our people where no heart lurked ?—" Ah,
 " What cannot an impostor do ! "

Not this !
 Not do this which I do ! Not bid, avaunt
 Falsehood ! Thou shalt not keep thy hold on me !
 —Nor even get a hold on me ! 'Tis now--
 This day—hour—minute—'tis as here I stand
 On the accursed threshold of the Prefect,
 That I am found deceiving and deceived !
 And now what do I ?—Hasten to the few
 Deceived, ere they deceive the many—shout,
 As I professed, I did believe myself !
 Say, Druses, had you seen a butchery—
 If Ayoob, Karshook saw—Maani there

Must tell you how I saw my father sink ;
 My mother's arms twine still about my neck ;
 I hear my brother's shriek, here's yet the scar
 Of what was meant for my own death-blow—say,
 If you had woken like me, grown year by year
 Out of the tumult in a far-off cline,
 Would it be wondrous such delusion grew ?
 I walked the world, asked help at every hand ;
 Came help or no ? Not this and this ? Which helps
 When I returned with, found the Prefect here,
 The Druses here, all here but Hakeem's self,
 The Khalif of the thousand prophecies,
 Reserved for such a juncture,—could I call
 My mission aught but Hakeem's ? Promised Hakeem
 More than performs the Djabal—you absolve ?
 —Me, you will never shame before the crowd
 Yet happily ignorant ?—Me, both throngs surround
 The few deceived, the many unabused,
 —Who, thus surrounded, slay for you and them
 The Prefect, lead to Lebanon ! No Khalif,
 But Sheikh once more ! Mere Djabal—not . . .

Enter KHALIL hastily.

Kha. — God Hakeem !
 'Tis told ! The whole Druse nation knows thee, Hakeem,
 As we ! and mothers lift on high their babes
 Who seem aware, so glisten their great eyes,
 Thou hast not failed us ; ancient brows are proud !
 Our Elders could not earlier die, it seems,
 Than at thy coming ! The Druse heart is thine !
 Take it ! my Lord and theirs, be thou adored !

Dja. [Aside.] Adored !—but I renounce it utterly !

Kha. Already are they instituting choirs
 And dances to the Khalif, as of old
 'Tis chronicled thou bad'st them.

Dja. [Aside.] I abjure it !
 'Tis not mine—not for me !

Kha. Why pour they wine
 Flavoured like honey and bruised mountain herbs ?
 Or wear those strings of sun-dried cedar-fruit ?
 Oh—let me tell thee—Esaad, we supposed
 Doting, is carried forth, eager to see
 The last sun rise on the Isle—he can see now !
 The shamed Druse women never wept before :
 They can look up when we reach home, they say.
 Smell !—Sweet cane, saved in Lilith's breast thus long—
 Sweet !—it grows wild in Lebanon. And I
 Alone do nothing for thee ! 'Tis my office

Just to announce what well thou know'st—but thus
 Thou bidst me. At this selfsame moment tend
 The Prefect, Nuncio, and the Admiral
 Hither, by their three sea-paths—nor forget
 Who were the trusty watchers!—Thou forget?
 Like me, who do forget that Anael bade . . .

Dja. [Aside.] Ay, Anael, Anael—is that said at last?
 Louder than all, that would be said, I knew!
 What does abjuring mean, confessing mean,
 To the people? Till that woman crossed my path,
 On went I, solely for my people's sake:
 I saw her, and I first saw too myself,
 And slackened pace: “if I should prove indeed
 Hakeem—with Anael by!”

Kha. [Aside.] Ah, he is rapt!
 Dare I at such a moment break on him
 Even to do my sister's bidding? Yes!
 The eyes are Djabal's, and not Hakeem's yet!
 Though but till I have spoken this, perchance.

Dja. [Aside.] To yearn to tell her, and yet have no one
 Great heart's-word that will tell her! I could gasp
 Doubtless one such word out, and die!

[Aloud.] You said
 That Anael . . .

Kha. . . . Fain would see thee, speak with thee,
 Before thou change, discard this Djabal's shape
 She knows, for Hakeem's shape she is to know:
 Something's to say that will not from her mind:
 I know not what—“Let him but come!” she said.

Dja. [Half-apart.] My nation—all my Druses—how fare
 they?

Those I must save, and suffer thus to save,
 Hold they their posts? Wait they their Khalif too?

Kha. All at the signal pant to flock around
 That banner of a brow!

Dja. [Aside.] And when they flock,
 Confess them this—and after, for reward,
 Be chased with howlings to her feet perchance?
 —Have the poor outraged Druses, deaf and blind,
 Precede me there—forestall my story, there—
 Tell it in mocks and jeers—

I lose myself!
 Who needs a Hakeem to direct him now?
 I need the veriest child—why not this child?

[Turning abruptly to KHALIL]
 You are a Druse too, Khalil; you were nourished
 Like Anael with our mysteries: if she
 Could vow, so nourished, to love only one

Who should revenge the Druses, whence proceeds
 Your silence? Wherefore made you no essay,
 Who thus implicitly can execute
 My bidding? What have I done, you could not?
 Who, knowing more than Anael the prostration
 Of our once lofty tribe, the daily life
 Of this detested . . .

Dja. Does he come, you say,
 This Prefect? All's in readiness?

Kha. The sword,
 The sacred robe, the Khalif's mystic tiar,
 Laid up so long, are all disposed beside
 The Prefect's chamber.

Dja. —Why did you despair?
Kha. I know our Nation's state? Too surely know,
 As thou, who speak'st to prove me! Wrongs like ours
 Should wake revenge: but when I sought the wronged
 And spoke,—“The Prefect stabbed your son—arise!
 “Your daughter, while you starve, eats shameless bread
 “In his pavilion—then, arise!”—my speech
 Fell idly—’twas, “Be silent, or worse fare!
 “Endure, till time's slow cycle prove complete.
 “Who may'st thou be that takest on thee to threat
 “Into this peril—art thou Hakeem?” No!
 Only a mission like thy mission renders
 All these obedient at a breath, subdues
 Their private passions brings their wills to one!

Dja. You think so?

Kha. Even now—when they have witnessed
 Thy miracles—had I not threatened them
 With Hakeem's vengeance, they would mar the whole,
 And lie ere this, each with his special prize,
 Safe in his dwelling, leaving our main hope
 To perish! No! When these have kissed thy feet
 At Lebanon, the Past purged off, the Present
 Clear,—for the Future, even Hakeem's mission
 May end, and I perchance, or any youth,
 Can rule them thus renewed.—I talk to thee!

Dja. And wisely. (He is Anael's brother, pure
 As Anael's self.) Go say, I come to her.
 Haste! I will follow you.

[KHALIL goes.

Oh, not confess
 To these—the blinded multitude—confess,
 Before at least the fortune of my deed
 Half-authorize its means! Only to her
 Let me confess my fault, who in my path
 Curled up like incense from a mage-king's tomb
 When he would have the wayfarer descend

Thro' the earth's rift and take hid treasure up.
 When should my first child's carelessness have stopped
 If not when I, whose lone youth hurried past,
 Letting each joy 'scape for the Druses' sake,
 At length recovered in one Druse all joys ?
 Were her brow brighter, her eyes richer, still
 Would I confess ! On the gulf's verge I pause.
 How could I slay the Prefect, thus and thus ?
 Anael, be mine to guard me, not destroy !

[Goes.]

Enter ANAEL, and MAANI, who is assisting to array her in the ancient dress of the Druses.

An. Those saffron-vestures of the tabret-girls !
 Comes Djabal, think you ?

Maa. Doubtless Djabal comes.

An. Dost thou snow-swathe thee kinglier, Lebanon,
 Than in my dreams ?—Nay, all the tresses off
 My forehead—look I lovely so ? He says
 That I am lovely.

Maa. Lovely ! nay, that hangs
 Awry.

An. You tell me how a khandjar hangs ?
 The sharp side, thus, along the heart, see, marks
 The maiden of our class. Are you content
 For Djabal as for me ?

Maa. Content, my child.

An. Oh, mother, tell me more of him. He comes
 Even now—tell more, fill up my soul with him !

Maa. And did I not . . . yes, surely . . . tell you all ?

An. What will be changed in Djabal when the Change
 Arrives ? Which feature ? Not his eyes !

Maa. 'Tis writ,
 Our Hakeem's eyes rolled fire and clove the dark
 Superbly.

An. Not his eyes ! His voice perhaps ?
 Yet that's no change ; for a grave current lived
 —Grandly beneath the surface ever lived,
 That, scattering, broke as in live silver spray
 While . . . ah, the bliss . . . he would discourse to me
 In that enforced, still fashion, word on word
 'Tis the old current which must swell thro' that,
 For what least tone, Maani, could I lose ?
 'Tis surely not his voice will change !

—If Hakeem

Only stood by ! If Djabal, somehow, passed
 Out of the radiance as from out a robe ;
 Possessed, but was not it !

He lived with you ?
 Well—and that morning Djabal saw me first
 And heard my vow never to wed but one
 Who saved my People—on that day . . . proceed

Maa. Once more, then : from the time of his return
 In secret, changed so since he left the Isle
 That I, who screened our Emir's last of sons,
 This Djabal, from the Prefect's massacre
 —Who bade him ne'er forget the child he was,
 —Who dreamed so long the youth he might become—
 I knew not in the man that child ; the man
 Who spoke alone of hopes to save our tribe,
 How he had gone from land to land to save
 Our tribe—allies were sure, nor foes to dread ;
 And much he mused, days, nights, alone he mused ;
 But never till that day when, pale and worn
 As by a persevering woo, he cried
 “ Is there not one Druse left me ? ”—And I showed
 The way to Khalil's and your hiding-place
 From the abhorred eye of the Prefect here,
 So that he saw you, heard you speak—till then,
 Never did he announce—(how the moon seemed
 To ope and shut, the while, above us both !)
 —His mission was the inission promised us—
 The cycle had revolved—all things renewing,
 He was lost Hakeem clothed in flesh to lead
 His children home anon, now veiled to work
 Great purposes—the Druses now would change.

An. And they have changed ! And obstacles did sink,
 And furtherances rose ! And round his form
 Played fire, and music beat her angel wings !
 My people, let me more rejoice, oh, more
 For you than for myself ! Did I but watch
 Afar the pageant, feel our Khalif pass,
 One of the throng, how proud were 'I—tho' ne'er
 Singled by Djabal's glance ! But to be chosen
 His own from all, the most his own of all,
 To be exalted with him, side by side.
 Lead the exulting Druses, meet . . . ah, how
 Worthily meet the maidens who await
 Ever beneath the cedars—how deserve
 This honour, in their eyes ? So bright are they
 That saffron-vestured sound the tabrets there—
 The girls who throng there in my dreams ! One hour
 And all is over : how shall I do aught
 That may deserve next hour's exalting ?—How ?—

[*Suddenly to MAANL.*
 Mother, I am not worthy of him ! I read it

Still in his eyes ! He stands as if to tell me
 I am not, yet forbears ! Why else revert
 To one theme ever ?—how mere human gifts
 Suffice him in myself—whose worship fades,
 Whose awe goes ever off at his approach,
 As now, that when he comes . . .

[*As Djabal enters.*] Oh, why is it
 I cannot kneel to you ?

Dja. Rather, 'tis I
 Should kneel to you, my Anael !

An. Even so !
 For never seem you—shall I speak the truth ?—
 Never a God to me ! 'Tis the Man's hand,
 Eye, voice ! Oh, do you veil these to our people,
 Or but to me ? To them, I think, to them !
 And brightness is their veil, shadow—my truth !
 You mean that I should never kneel to you
 —So I will kneel !

Dja. [*preventing her.*] No—no ! [*Feeling the khandjar as he raises her.*]
 Ha, have you chosen . . .

An. The khandjar with our ancient garb. But, Djabal,
 Change not, be not exalted yet ! give time
 That I may plan more, perfect more. My blood
 Beats—beats !

[*Aside.*] O must I then—since Loys leaves us
 Never to come again, renew in me
 Those doubts so near effaced already—must
 I needs confess them now to Djabal ?—Own
 That when I saw that stranger—heard his voice,
 My faith fell, and the woeful thought flashed first
 That each effect of Djabal's presence, taken
 For proof of more than human attributes
 In him, by me whose heart at his approach
 Bent fast, whose brain while he was by swam round,
 Whose soul at his departure died away,
 —That every such effect might have been wrought
 In others' frames, tho' not in mine, by Loys
 Or any merely mortal presence ? Doubt
 Is fading fast; shall I reveal it now ?
 How can I be rewarded presently,
 With doubt unexpiated, undisclosed ?

Dja. [*Aside.*] Avow the truth ? I cannot ! In what words
 Avow that all she loves in me is false ?
 —Which yet has served that flower-like love of hers
 To climb by, like the clinging gourd, and clasp
 With its divinest wealth of leaf and bloom.
 Could I take down the prop-work, in itself

So vile, yet interlaced and overlaid
 With painted cups and fruitage—might these still
 Bask in the sun, unconscious their own strength
 Of matted stalk and tendril had replaced
 The old support thus silently withdrawn !
 But no ; the beauteous fabric crushes too.
 'Tis not for my sake but for Anael's sake
 I leave her soul this Hakeem where it leans !
 Oh, could I vanish from them—quit the Isle !
 And yet—a thought comes : here my work is done
 At every point ; the Druses must return—
 Have convoy to their birthplace back, whoe'er
 The leader be, myself or any Druse—
 Venice is pledged to that : 'tis for myself,
 For my own vengeance in the Prefect's death,
 I stay now, not for them—to slay or spare
 The Prefect, whom imports it save myself ?
 He cannot bar their passage from the Isle ;
 What would his death be but my own reward ?
 Then, mine I will forego. It is foregone !
 Let him escape with all my House's blood !
 Ere he can reach land, Djabal disappears,
 And Hakeem, Anael loved, shall, fresh as first,
 Live in her memory, keeping her sublime
 Above the world. She cannot touch that world
 By ever knowing what I truly am,
 Since Loys,—of mankind the only one
 Able to link my present with my past,
 My Life in Europe with my Island life,
 Thence, able to unmask me,—I've disposed
 Safely at last at Rhodes, and . . .

Enter Khalil.

Kha.

Loys greets thee !

Dja. Loys ? To drag me back ? It cannot be !

An. [Aside.] Loys ! Ah, doubt may not be stifled so !

Kha. Can I have erred that thou so gazest ? Yes,
 I told thee not, in the glad press of tidings
 Of higher import, Loys is returned
 Before the Prefect, with, if possible,
 Twice the light-heartedness of old. As though
 On some inauguration he expects,
 To-day, the world's fate hung !

Dja.

—And asks for me ?

Kha. Thou knowest all things ! Thee in chief he greets.
 But every Druse of us is to be happy
 At his arrival, he declares : were Loys

Thou, Master, he could have no wider soul
To take us in with. How I love that Loys !

Dja. [Aside.] Shame winds me with her tether round and round !

An. [Aside] Loys ? I take the trial ! it is meet,
The little I can do, be done ; that faith,
All I can offer, want no perfecting
Which my own act may compas. Ay, this way
All may go well, nor that ignoble doubt
Be chased by other aid than mine. Advance
Close to my fear, weigh Loys with my Lord,
The mortal's with the more than mortal's gifts !

Dja. [Aside.] Before, there were so few deceived ! and now
There's doubtless not one least Druse in the Isle
But (having learned my superhuman claims,
And calling me his Khalif-God) will clash
The whole truth out from Loys at first word !
While Loys, for his part, will hold me up
With a Frank's unimaginable scorn
Of such imposture, to my people's eyes !
Could I but hold him longer yet awhile
From them, amuse him here until I plan
How he and I at once may leave the Isle ?
Khalil I cannot part with from my side—
My only help in this emergency :
There's Anael !

An. Please you ?

Dja. (Anael—none but she !)

[To ANAEL.] I pass some minutes in the chamber there,
Ere I see Loys : you shall speak with him
Until I join you. Khalil follows me.

An. [Aside.] As I divined : he bids me save myself,
Offers me a probation—I accept !
Let me see Loys !

Loys. [without.] Djabal !

An. [Aside.] 'Tis his voice.

The smooth Frank trifler with our people's wrongs,
The self-complacent boy-inquirer, loud
On this and that inflicted tyranny,
—Aught serving to parade an ignorance
Of how wrong feels, inflicted ! Let me close
With what I viewed at distance ; let myself
Probe this delusion to the core !

Dja. He comes !

Khalil, along with me ! while Anael waits
Till I return once more—and but once more !

ACT III,

ANAELOYS.

An. Here leave me ! Here I wait another. 'Twas
For no mad protestation of a love
Like this you say possesses you, I came.

Loy. Love—how protest a love I dare not feel ?
Mad words may doubtless have escaped me—you
Are here—I only feel you here !

An. No more !
Loy. But once again, whom could you love ? I dare,
Alas, say nothing of myself, who am
A Knight now, for when Knighthood we embrace,
Love we abjure : so speak on safely—speak,
Lest I speak, and betray my faith so ! Sure
To say your breathing passes thro' me, changes
My blood to spirit, and my spirit to you,
As Heaven the sacrificer's wine to it—
This is not to protest my love ? You said
You could love one . . .

An. One only ! We are bent
To earth—who raises up my tribe, I love ;
The Prefect bows us—who removes him ; we
Have ancient rights—who gives them back to us,
I love.—Forbear me ! Let my hand go !

Loy. Him
You could love only ? Where is Djabal ? Stay !
[Aside.] Yet wherefore stay ? Who does this but myself ?
Had I apprized her that I come to do
Just this, what more could she acknowledge ? No !
She sees into my heart's core : what is it
Feeds either cheek with red, as June some rose ?
Why turns she from me ? Ah fool, over-fond
To dream I could call up . . .

. . . What never dream
Yet feigned ! 'Tis love ! Oh Anael, speak to me
Djabal !

An. Seek Djabal by the Prefect's chamber
At noon ! [She paces the room.]

Loy. [Aside.] And am I not the Prefect now ?
Is it my fate to be the only one
Able to win her love, the only one

Unable to accept her love ? The Past
 Breaks up beneath my footing : came I here
 This morn as to a slave, to set her free
 And take her thanks, and then spend day by day
 Content beside her in the Isle ? What works
 This knowledge in me now ! Her eye has broken
 The faint disguise away ; for Anael's sake
 I left the Isle, for her espoused the cause
 Of the Druses, all for her I thought, till now,
 To live without !

—As I must live ! To-day
 Ordains me Knight, forbids me—never shall
 Forbid me to profess myself, heart, arm,
 Thy soldier !

An. Djabal you demanded, comes !

Loys. [Aside.] What wouldest thou, Loys ? See him ?
 Nought beside

Is wanting : I have felt his voice a spell
 From first to last. He brought me here, made known
 The Druses to me, drove me hence to seek
 Redress for them ; and shall I meet him now,
 When nought is wanting but a word of his,
 'To—what ?—induce me to spurn hope, faith, pride,
 Honour away,—to cast my lot among
 His tribe, become a proverb in men's mouths,
 Breaking my high pact of companionship
 With those who graciously bestowed on me
 The very opportunities I turn
 Against them.

Let me not see Djabal now !

An. The Prefect also comes !

Loys. [Aside.] Him let me see,
 Not Djabal ! Him, degraded at a word,
 To please me,—to attest belief in me—
 And, after, Djabal ! Yes, ere I return
 To her, the Nuncio's vow shall have destroyed
 This heart's rebellion, and coerced this will
 For ever.

Anael, not before the vows
 Irrevocably fix me . . .

Fet me fly

The Prefect, or I lose myself for ever !

An. Yes, I am calm now ; just one way remains—
 One, to attest my faith in him : for, see,
 I were quite lost else : Loys, Djabal, stand
 On either side—two men ! I balance looks
 And words, give Djabal a man's preference,
 No more. In Djabal, Hakeem is absorbed !

[Gocs.

And for a love like this, the God who saves
My race, selects me for his bride ! One way !—

Enter DJABAL,

Dja. [to himself.] No moment is to waste, then ; 'tis resolved !

If Khalil may be trusted to lead back
The Druses, and if Loys can be lured
Out of the Isle—if I procure his silence,
Or promise never to return at least,—
All's over ! Even now my bark awaits—
I reach the next wild islet and the next,
And lose myself beneath the sun for ever !
And now, to Anael !

An. Djabal, I am thine !

Dja. Mine ? Djabal's ?—As if Hakeem had not been ?

An. Not Djabal's ? Say first, do you read my thoughts ?
Why need I speak, if you can read my thoughts ?

Dja. I do not, I have said a thousand times.

An. (My secret's safe, I shall surprise him yet !)

Djabal, I knew your secret from the first—
Djabal, when first I saw you . . . (by our porch
You leant, and pressed the tinkling veil away,
And one fringe fell behind your neck—I see !)
. . . I knew you were not human, for I said
“This dim secluded house where the sea beats
Is Heaven to me—my people's huts are Hell
To them ; this august form will follow me,
Mix with the waves his voice will,—I have him ;
And they, the Prefect ; Oh, my happiness
Rounds to the full whether I choose or no !
His eyes met mine, he was about to speak,
His hand grew damp—surely he meant to say
He let me love him : in that moment's bliss
I shall forget my people pine for home--
They pass and they repass with pallid eyes !”
I vowed at once a certain vow ; this vow --
Not to embrace you till my tribe was saved.
Embrace me !

Dja. [Apart.] And she loved me ! Nought remained
But that ! Nay, Anael, is the Prefect dead ?

An. Ah, you reproach me ! True, his death crowns all,
I know—or should know—and I would do much,
Believe ! but, death—Oh, you, who have known death,
Would never doom the Prefect, were death fearful
As we report !

Death !—a fire curls within us
From the foot's palm, and fills up to the brain,

Up, out, then shatters the whole bubble-shell
Of flesh, perchance !

Death !—witness, I would die,
Whate'er death be, would venture now to die
For Khalil—for Maani—what for thee ?
Nay, but embrace me, Djabal, in assurance
My vow will not be broken, for I must
Do something to attest my faith in you,
Be worthy of you !

Dja. [avoiding her.] I come for that—to say
Such an occasion is at hand : 'tis like
I leave you—that we part, my Anael,—part
For ever !

An. We part ? Just so ! I have succumbed,—
I am, he thinks, unworthy—and nought less
Will serve than such approval of my faith !
Then, we part not ! Remains there no way short
Of that ? Oh, not that !

Death !—Yet a hurt bird
Died in my hands—its eyes filmed—“ Nay, it sleeps ”
I said, “ will wake to-morrow well ”—’twas dead !

Dja. I stand here and time fleets Anael—I come
To bid a last farewell to you : perhaps
We never meet again—but, ere the Prefect
Arrive . . .

Enter KHALIL breathlessly.

Kha. He's here ! The Prefect ! Twenty guards,
No more—no sign he dreams of danger—all
Awaits thee only—Ayoob, Karshook, keep
Their posts—wait but the deed's accomplishment
To join us with thy Druses to a man !
Still holds his course the Nuncio—near and near
The fleet from Candia's steering !

Dja. [Aside.] All is lost !
—Or won ?

Kha. And I have laid the sacred robes,
The sword, the head-tiar, at the porch—the place
Commanded—Thou wilt hear the Prefect's trumpet.

Dja. Then I keep Anael,—him then, past recall,
I slay—'tis forced on me ! As I began
I must conclude—so be it !

Kha. For the rest
(Save Loys, our foe's solitary sword)
All is so safe that . . . I will ne'er entreat
Thy post again of thee—tho' danger's none,
There must be glory only meet for thee
In slaying the Prefect !

An. [Aside.] And 'tis now that Djabal
Would leave me!—in the glory meet for him!

Dja. As glory, I would yield the deed to you,
Or any one; what peril there may be,
I keep. [Aside.] All things conspire to hound me on!
Not now, my soul, draw back, at least! Not now!
The course is plain, howe'er obscure all else—
Once offer this tremendous sacrifice,
Prevent what else will be irreparable,
Secure these transcendental helps, regain
The Cedars—then let all dark clear itself!
I slay him!

Kha. Anael, and no part for us!
[To Dja.] Hast thou possessed her with . . .

Dja. [to An.] Whom speak you to?
What is it you behold there? Nay, this sinile
Turns stranger—shudder you? The man must die,
As thousands of our race have died thro' him.
One blow, and I discharge his weary soul
From the flesh that pollutes it—let him fill
Straight some new expiatory form, of earth
Or sea, the reptile, or some aëry thing—
What is there in his death?

An. My brother said,
Is there no part in it for us?

Dja. For Khalil,—
The trumpet will announce the Nuncio's entry;
Here, I shall find the Prefect hastening
In the Pavilion to receive him—here,
I slay the Prefect; meanwhile Ayoob leads
The Nuncio with his guards within—once these
Secured in the outer hall, bid Ayoob bar
Entry or egress till I give the sign
Which waits the landing of the argosies
You will announce to me; this double sign
That justice is performed and help arrived,
When Ayoob shall receive, but not before,
Let him throw ope the palace doors, admit
The Druses to behold their tyrant, ere
We leave for ever this detested spot.
Go, Khalil, hurry all—no pause—no pause:
Whirl on the dream, secure to wake anon!

Kha. What sign? and who the bearer?

Dja. Who shall show
My ring, admit to Ayoob—How she stands!
Have I not . . . I must have some task for her.
Anael! not that way! 'Tis the Prefect's chamber!
Anael, keep you the ring—give you the sign!

(It holds her safe amid the stir)—You will
Be faithful?

An. [taking the ring.] I would fain be worthy of you!
[Trumpet without.]

Kha. He comes!

Dja. And I too come!

An. One word, but one!

Say, shall you be exalted at the deed?

Then? On the instant?

Dja. I exalted? What?
He, there—we, thus—our wrongs revenged—our tribe
Set free—Oh, then shall I, assure yourself,
Shall you, shall each of us, be in his death
Exalted!

Kha. He is here!

Dja. Away—away! [They go]

Enter the PREFECT with Guards, and Loys.

The Prefect. [to Guards.] Back, I say, to the galley every
guard!

That's my sole care now; see each bench retains
Its complement of rowers; I embark
O' the instant, since this Knight will have it so.
Alas me! Could you have the heart, my Loys?

[To a Guard who whispers.] Oh, bring the holy Nuncio here
forthwith! [The Guards go.]

Loys, a rueful sight, confess, to see
The grey discarded Prefect leave his post,
With tears i' the eye! So you are Prefect now?
You depose me—you succeed me? Ha, ha!

Loys. And dare you laugh, whon laughter less becomes
Than yesterday's forced meekness we beheld . . .

Pref. . . . When you so eloquently pleaded, Loys,
For my dismissal from the post?—Ah, meck
With cause enough, consult the Nuncio else!
And wish him the like meekness—for so staunch
A servant of the church can scarce have bought
His share in the Isle, and paid for it, hard pieces!
You 'ye my successor to condole with, Nuncio!
I shall be safe by them i' the galley, Loys!

Loys. You make as you would tell me you rejoice
To leave your scene of . . .

Pref. Trade in the dear Druses?
Blood and sweat traffic? Spare what yesterday
We had enough of! Drove I in the Isle
A profitable game? Learn wit, my son,
Which you 'll need shortly! Did it never breed
Suspicion in you, all was not pure profit,

When I, the insatiato . . . and so forth . . . was bent
On having a partaker in my rule ?

Why did I yield this Nuncio half the gain,
If not that I might also shift . . . what on him ?
Half of the peril, Loys !

Loys. Peril ?

Pref. Hark you !

I'd love you if you'd let me—this for reason,
You save my life at price of . . . well, say risk
At least, of yours. I came a long time since
To the Isle ; our Hospitallers bade me taine
These savage wizards, and reward myself—

Loys. The Knights who so repudiate your crime ?

Pref. Loys, the Knights ! we doubtless understood
Each other ; as for trusting to reward
From any friend beside myself . . . No, no !
I clutched mine on the spot, when it was sweet,
And I had taste for it. I felt these wizards
Alive—was sure they were not on me, only
When I was on them : but with age comes caution :
And stinging pleasures please less and sting more.
Year by year, fear by fear ! The girls were brighter
Than ever ('faith, there's yet one Anael left,
I set my heart upon—Oh, prithee, let
That brave new sword lie still !)—These joys looked brighter,
But silenter the town, too, as I passed.
With this alcove's delicious memories
Began to mingle visions of gaunt fathers,
Quick-eyed sons, fugitives from the mine, the oar,
Stealing to catch me : brief, when I began
To quake with fear—(I think I hear the Chapter
Solicited to let me leave, now all
Worth staying for was gained and gone !)—I say,
Just when for the remainder of my life
All methods of escape seemed lost—that then
Up should a young hot-headed Loys spring,
Talk very long and loud, in fine, compel
The Knights to break their whole arrangement, have me
Home for pure shame—from this safehold of mine
Where but ten thousand Druses seek my life,
To my wild place of banishment, San Gines
By Murcia, where my three fat minors lying,
Purchased by gains here and the Nuncio's gold,
Are all I have to guard me,—that such fortune
Should fall to me, I hardly could expect !
Therefore, I say, I'd love you !

Loys. Can it be ?

I play into your hands then ? Oh, no, no !

The Venerable Chapter, the Great Order
Sunk o' the sudden into fiends of the pit ?
But I will back—will yet unveil you !

Pref. Me ?

To whom ?—perhaps Sir Galeas, who in Chapter
Shook his white head thrice—and some dozen times
My hand this morning shook, for value paid
To that Italian Saint, Sir Cosimo ?—
Indignant at my wringing year by year
A thousand bezants from the coral-divers,
As you recounted ; felt he not aggrieved ?
Well might he—I allowed for his half-share
Merely one hundred ! To Sir . . .

Loys. See ! you dare

Inculpate the whole Order ; yet should I,
A youth, a sole voice, have the power to change
Their evil way, had they been firm in it ?
Answer me !

Pref. Oh, the son of Bretagne's Duke,
And that son's wealth, the father's influence, too,
And the young arm, we'll even say, my Loys,
—The fear of losing or diverting these
Into another channel, by gainsaying
A novice too abruptly, could not influence
The Order ! You might join, for aught they cared,
Their red-cross rivals of the Temple ! Well,
I thank you for my part, at all events !
Stay here till they withdraw you ! You'll inhabit
This palace—sleep, perchance, in this alcove,
Where now I go to meet our holy friend :
Good ! and now disbelieve me if you can :
This is the first time for long years I enter
Thus [*lifts the arras*] without feeling just as if I lifted
The lid up of my tomb !

Loys. They share his crime !
God's punishment will overtake you yet !

Pref. Thank you it does not ! Pardon this last flash
I bear a sober visage presently
With the disinterested Nuncio here—
His purchase-money safe at Murcia too !
Let me repeat—for the first time, no draught
Coming as from a sepulchre salutes me.
When we next meet, this folly may have passed,
We'll hope—Ha, ha ! [Goes thro' the arras.]

Loys. Assure me but . . . he's gone !
He could not lie ! Then what have I escaped ?
I, who have so nigh given up happiness
For evor, to be linked with him and them !

Oh, opportunest of discoveries ! I
 Their Knight ? I utterly renounce them all !
 Hark ! What, he meets by this the Nuncio ? yes
 The same hyæna groan-like laughter ! Quick—
 To Djabal ! I am one of them at last,
 Those simple-hearted Druses—Anael's tribe !
 Djabal ! She's mine at last—Djabal, I say !—

[Goes.]

ACT IV.

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. Let me but slay the Prefect—The end now !
 To-morrow will be time enough to pry
 Into the means I took : suffice, they served,
 Ignoble as they were, to hurl revenge
 True to its object. [Seeing the robes, &c. disposed.
 . . . Mine should never so
 Have hurried to accomplishment ! Thee, Djabal,
 Far other moods befitted ! Calm the Robe
 Should clothe this doom's awarder !

[Taking the robe.] Shall I dare
 Assume my nation's Robe ? I am at least
 A Druse again, chill Europe's policy
 Drops from me—I dare take the Robe. Why not
 The Tiar ? I rule the Druses, and what more
 Betokens it than rule ?—yet—yet— [Lays down the Tiar.
 [Footsteps in the alcove] He comes ! [Taking the sword.
 If the sword serves, let the Tiar lie ! So, feet
 Clogged with the blood of twenty years can fall
 Thus lightly ! Round me, all ye ghosts ! He'll lift . . .
 Which arm to push the arras wide ?—or both ?
 Stab from the neck down to the heart—there stay !
 Near he comes—nearer—the next footstep ! Now !

[As he dashes aside the arras, ANAEL is discovered.
 Ha ! Anael ! Nay, my Anael, can it be ?
 Heard you the trumpet ? I must slay him here,
 And here you ruin all. Why speak you not ?
 Anael, the Prefect comes ! [ANAELO screams.] So late to feel
 'Tis not a sight for you to look upon ?
 A moment's work—but such work ! Till you go,
 I must be idle—idle, I risk all ! [Pointing to her hair.]

Those locks are well, and you are beauteous thus,
But with the dagger 'tis I have to do !

An. With mine !

Dja. Blood—Anael ?

An. Djabal—'tis thy deed !

It must be—I had hoped to claim it mine—

Be worthy thee—but I must needs confess

'Twas not I, but thyself . . not I have . . Djabal !

Speak to me !

Dja. Oh my punishment !

An. Speak to me !

While I can speak—touch me—despite the blood !

When the command passed from thy soul to mine,

I went, fire leading me, muttering of thee,

And the approaching exaltation,—make

One sacrifice ! I said,—and he sate there,

Bade me approach ; and, as I did approach,

Thy fire with music burst into my brain—

'Twas but a moment's work, thou saidst—perchance

It may have been so ! well; it is thy deed !

Dja. It is my deed !

An. His blood, all this !—this ! And

And more—sustain me, Djabal—wait not—now

Let flash thy glory ! Change thyself and me !

It must be ! Ere the Druses flock to us !

At least confirm me ! Djabal—blood gushed forth—

He was our tyrant—but I looked he 'd fall

Prone as asleep—why else is Death called sleep ?

Sleep ? He bent o'er his breast—'Tis sin, I know,

Punish me, Djabal, but wilt thou let him ?

Be it thou that punisheth, not he—who creeps

On his red breast—is here—'tis the small groan

Of a child—no worse ! Bestow the new life, then !

Too swift it cannot be, too strange, surpassing !

[Following him up and down.

Now ! Change us both ! Change me and change thou !

Dja. [sinks on his knees.] Thus !

Behold my change ! You have done nobly ! I !—--

An. Can Hakeem kneel ?

Dja. No Hakeem, but mere Djabal !

I have spoken falsely, and this woe is come.

No—hear me ere scorn blasts me ! Once and ever,

The deed is mine . . Oh think upon the Past !

An. [to herself.] Did I strike once, or twice, or many times ?

Dja. . . I came to lead my tribe where, bathed in glooms,

Doth Bahumid the Renovator sleep—

Anael, I saw my tribe—I said, "Without

A miracle this cannot be"—I said
 "Be there a miracle!"—for I saw you!

An. His head lies south of the portal!

Dja. —Weigh with this

The general good, how could I choose my own,
 What matter was my purity of soul?
 Little by little I engaged myself—
 Heaven would accept me for its instrument,
 I hoped—I said, Heaven had accepted me!

An. Is it this blood breeds dreams in me?—Who said
 You were not Hakeem? and your miracles—
 The fire that plays innocuous round your form?

[Again changing her whole manner.]

Ah, thy wouldst try me—thou art Hakeem still!

Dja. Woe—woe! As if the Druses of the Mount
 (Scarce Arabs even there—but here, in the Isle,
 Beneath their former selves) should comprehend
 The subtle lore of Europe! A few secrets
 That would not easily affect the meanest
 Of the crowd there, could wholly subjugate
 The best of our poor tribe! Again that eye?

An. [after a pause springs to his neck.] Djabal, in this there
 can be no deceit!
 Why, Djabal, were you human only,—think,
 Mauni is but human, Khalil human,
 Loys is human even—did their words
 Haunt me, their looks pursue me? Shame on you
 So to have tried me! Rather, shame on me
 So to need trying! Could I, with the Prefect
 And the blood, there—could I see only you?
 —Hang by your neck over this gulf of blood?
 Speak, I am saved! Speak, Djabal! Am I saved?

[As DJABAL slowly unclasps her arms, and puts her
 silently from him—]

Hakeem would save me! Thou art Djabal! Crouch!
 Bow to the dust, thou basest of our kind!
 The pile of thee I reared up to the cloud—
 Full, midway, of our Fathers' trophied tombs,
 Based on the living rock, devoured not by
 The unstable desert's jaws of sand,—falls prone!
 Fire, music, quenched: and now thou liest there
 A ruin, obscene creatures will moan thro'!
 —Let us come, Djabal!

Dja. Whither come?

An. At once—

Lest so it grow intolerable. Come!
 Will I not share it with thee? Best at once!
 So feel less pain! Let them deride—thy tribe

Now trusting in thee,—Loys shall deride !
Come to them, hand in hand, with me !

Dja.

Where come ?

An. Where ?—to the Druses thou hast wronged ! Confess,
Now that the end is gained—(I love thee now)
That thou hast so deceived them—(perchance love thee
Better than ever !) Come, receive their doom
Of infamy—(Oh, best of all I love thee !
Shame with the man, no triumph with the God,
Be mine !) Come !

Dja.

Never ! more shame yet ? and why

Why ? You have called this deed mine—it is mine !
And with it I accept its circumstance.
How can I longer strive with Fate ? The Past
Is past—my false life shall henceforth show true—
Hear me : the argosies touch land by this ;
They bear us to fresh scenes and happier skies ;
What if we reign together ?—if we keep
Our secret for the Druses' good ?—by means
Of even their superstition, plant in them
New life ? I learn from Europe : all who seek
Man's good must awe man, by such means as these.
We two will be divine to them—we are !
All great works in this world spring from the ruins
Of greater projects—ever, on our earth,
Men block out Babels, to build Babylons.
I wrest the weapon from your hand ! I claim
The deed ! Retire ! You have my ring—you bar
All access to the Nuncio till the forces
From Venice land !

An.

Thou wilt feign Hakeem then ?

Dja. [putting the Tiar of Hakeem on his head.] And
from this moment that I dare ope wide
Eyes that till now refused to see, begins
My true dominion ! for I know myself,
And what I am to personate. No word ? [ANUEL goes.
"Tis come on me at last ! His blood on her—
What memories will follow that ! Her eye,
Her fierce distorted lip and ploughed black brow—
Ah, fool ! Has Europe then so poorly tamed
The Syrian blood from out thee ? Thou, presume
To work in this foul earth by means not foul ?
Scheme, as for Heaven,—but, on the earth, be glad
If a least ray like Heaven's be left thee !

Thus

I shall be calm—in readiness—no way

Surprised.

[A noise without.

This should be Khalil and my Druses !

Venice is come then ! Thus I grasp thee, sword !
 Druses, 'tis Hakeem saves you ! In ! Behold
 Your Prefect !

Enter Loys. Djabal hides the khandjar in his robe.

Loys. Oh, well found, Djabal !—but no time for words.
 You know who waits there ? [Pointing to the alcove.] Well !—and that 'tis there
 He meets the Nuncio ? Well ! Now, a surprise—
 He there—

Dja. I know—

Loys. —is now no mortal's lord.
 Is absolutely powerless—call him, dead—
 He is no longer Prefect—you are Prefect !
 Oh, shrink not ! I do nothing in the dark,
 Nothing unworthy Breton blood, believe !
 I understood at once your urgency
 That I should leave this isle for Rhodes ; I felt
 What you were loth to speak—your need of help;
 I have fulfilled the task, that earnestness
 Imposed on me ; have, face to face, confronted
 The Prefect in full Chapter, charged on him
 The enormities of his long rule ; he stood
 Mute, offered no defence, no crime denied ;
 On which, I spoke of you, and of your tribe,
 Your faith so like our own, and all you've urged
 So oft to me—I spoke, too, of your goodness,
 Your patience—brief, I hold henceforth the Isle
 In charge, am nominally Prefect,—but you,
 You are associated in my rule—
 Are the true Prefect ! Ay, such faith had they
 In my assurance of your loyalty
 (For who insults an imbecile old man ?)
 That we assume the Prefecture this hour !
 You gaze at me ! Hear greater wonders yet—
 I throw down all this fabric I have built !
 These Knights, I was prepared to worship . . . but
 Of that another time ; what's now to say,
 Is—I shall never be a Knight ! Oh, Djabal,
 Here first I throw all prejudice aside,
 And call you brother ! I am Druse like you !
 My wealth, my friends, my power, are wholly yours,
 Your people's, which is now my people—for
 There is a maiden of your tribe, I love—
 She loves me—Khalil's sister—

Dja.

Anael ?

Loys.

Start you ?

Seems what I say unknightly? Thus it chanced :
When first I came, a novice, to the Isle . . .

Enter one of the NUNCIO's Guards from the alcove.

Guard. Oh, horrible! Sir Loys! Here is Loys.
And here — [Others enter from the alcove.
[Pointing to DJABAL.] Secure him, bind him—this is he!
[They surround DJABAL.

Loys. Madmen—what is 't you do? Stand from my friend,
And tell me!

Guard. Thou canst have no part in this—
Surely no part—but slay him not! The Nuncio
Commanded, Slay him not!

Loys. Speak, or . . .

Guard. The Prefect
Lies murdered there by him thou dost embrace.

Loys. By Djabal? miserable fools! How Djabal?

[A Guard lifts DJABAL'S robe; DJABAL flings down the
khandjar.

Loys. [after a pause.] Thou hast received some insult worse
than all—

Some outrage not to be endured—

[To the Guards.] Stand back!

He is my friend—more than my friend! Thou hast
Slain him upon that provocation!

Guard. No!
No provocation! 'Tis a long-devised
Conspiracy: the whole tribe is involved:
He is their Khalif—'tis on that pretence—
Their mighty Khalif who died long ago,
And now is come to life and light again—
All is just now revealed, I know not how,
By one of his confederates—who, struck
With horror at this murder, first apprised
The Nuncio. As 'twas said, we find this Djabal
Here where we take him.

Dja. [Aside.] Who broke faith with me?

Loys. [to DJABAL.] Hear'st thou? Speak! Till thou speak,
I keep off these,

Or die with thee. Deny this story! Thou
A Khalif, an impostor? Thou, my friend
Whose tale was of an inoffensive race,
With . . . but thou know'st—on that tale's truth I pledged
My faith before the Chapter: what art thou?

Dja. Loys, I am as thou hast heard. All's true!
No more concealment! As these tell thee, all
Was long since planned. Our Druses are enough
To crush this handful: the Venetians land

Even now in our behalf. Loys, we part here !
 Thou, serving much, wouldest fain have served me more :
 It might not be. I thank thee. As thou hearest,
 We are a separated tribe : farewell !

Loys. Oh, where will trut' be found now ? Canst thou so
 Belie the Druses ? Do they share thy crime ?
 Those thou professedst of our Breton stock
 Are partners with thee ? Why, I saw but now
 Khalil, my friend—he spoke with me—no word
 Of this ! and Anael—whom I love, and who
 Loves me—she spoke no word of this !

Dja. Poor Boy !
 Anael, who loves thee ? Khalil, fast thy friend ?
 We, offsets from a wandering Count of Dreux ?
 No—older than the oldest—princelier
 Than Europe's princeliest tribe are we.—Enough
 For thee, that on our simple faith we found
 A monarchy to shame your monarchies
 At their own trick and secret of success.
 The child of this our tribe shall laugh upon
 The palace-step of him whose life ere night
 Is forfeit, as that child shall know, and yet
 Shall laugh there ! What, we Druses wait forsooth
 The kind interposition of a boy ?
 —Can only save ourselves when thou concedest ?
 —Khalil admire thee ? He is my right hand,
 My delegate !—Anael accept thy love ?
 She is my Bride !

Loys. Thy Bride ? She one of them ?

Dja. My Bride !

Loys. And she retains her glorious eyes !
 She, with those eyes, has shared this miscreant's guilt !
 Ah—who but she directed me to find
 Djabal within the Prefect's chamber ? Khalil
 Bade me seek Djabal there too ! All is true !
 What spoke the Prefect worse of them than this ?
 Did the Church ill to institute long since
 Perpetual warfare with such serpentry
 As these ? Have I desired to shift my part,
 Evade my share in her design ? 'Tis well !

Dja. Loys, I have wronged thee—but unwittingly :
 I never thought there was in thee a virtue
 That could attach itself to what thou deemest
 A race below thine own. I wronged thee, Loys,
 But that is over : all is over now,
 Save the protection I ensure against
 My people's anger—by their Khalif's side,
 Thou art secure and may'st depart : so, come !

Loys. Thy side ?—I take protection at thy hand ?

Enter other Guards.

Guards. Fly with him ! fly, Sir Loys ! 'tis too true !
 And only by his side thou may'st escape !
 The whole tribe is in full revolt—they flock
 About the palace—will be here—on thee—
 And there are twenty of us, we, the Guards
 Of the Nuncio, to withstand them ! Even we
 Had stayed to meet our death in ignorance,
 But that one Druse, a single faithful Druse,
 Made known the horror to the Nuncio ! Fly !
 The Nuncio stands aghast. At least let us
 Escape their wrath, O Hakeem ! We are nought
 In thy tribe's persecution ! [to Loys.] Keep by him !
 They hail him Hakeem, their dead Prince, returned—
 He is their God, they shout, and at his beck
 Are life and death !

Loys. [springing at the khandjar DJABAL had thrown down,
 seizes him by the throat.]

Thus by his side am I !

Thus I resume my knighthood and its warfare !
 Thus end thee, miscreant, in thy pride of place !
 Thus art thou caught ! Without, thy dupes may cluster,
 Friends aid thee, foes avoid thee,—thou art Hakeem,
 How say they ?—God art thou ! but also here
 Is the least, meanest, youngest the Church calls
 Her servant, and his single arm avails
 To aid her as she lists. I rise, and thou
 Art crushed ! Hordes of thy Druses flock without ;
 Here thou hast me, who represent the Cross,
 Honour and Faith, 'gainst Hell, Mahound, and thee !
 Die ! [DJABAL remains calm.] Implore my mercy, Hakeem,
 that my scorn
 May help me ! Nay—I cannot ply thy trade—
 I am no Druse—no stabber—and thine eye,
 Thy form, are too much as they were—my friend
 Had such ! Speak ! Beg for mercy at my foot !

[DJABAL still silent.]

Heaven could not ask so much of me—not, sure,
 So much ! I cannot kill him so !

Thou art
 Strong in thy cause, then ! Dost outbrave us, then !
 Heard'st thou that one of thine accomplices,
 Thy very people, has accused thee ? Meet
 His charge ! Thou hast not even slain the Prefect
 As thy own vile creed warrants, Meet that Druse—
 Come with me and disprove him—be thou tried

By him, nor seek appeal—promise me this—
Or I will do God's office ! What, shalt thou
Boast of assassins at thy beck, yet Truth
Want even an executioner ? Consent,
Or I will strike—look in my face—I will !

Dja. Give me again my khandjar, if thou darest !

[Loys gives it.

Let but one Druse accuse me, and I plunge
This home. A Druse betray me ? Let us go !

[Aside.] Who has betrayed me ? [Shouts without.

Hearest thou ? I hear

No plainer now than years ago I heard
That shout—but in no dream now ! They Return !
Wilt thou be leader with me, Loys ? Well !

ACT V.

The Uninitiated Druses, covering the stage tumultuously, and speaking together.

Here flock we, obeying the summons. Lo, Hakeem hath appeared, and the Prefect is dead, and we return to Lebanon ! My manufacture of goats' fleece must, I doubt, soon fall away there—Come, old Nasif—link thine arm in mine—we fight, if needs be—Come, what is a great fight-word ? “Lebanon ?” (My daughter—my daughter !)—But is Khalil to have the office of Haniza ?—Nay, rather, if he be wise, the monopoly of hennin and cloves—Where is Hakeem ?—The only prophet I ever saw, prophesied at Cairo once, in my youth—a little black Copt, dressed all in black too, with a great stripe of yellow cloth flapping down behind him like the back-fin of a water-serpent—Is this he ? Biamrallah ! Biamreh ! HAKEEM !

Enter the NUNCIO with Guards.

Nuncio. [to his Attendants.] Hold both, the sorcerer and this accomplice

Ye talk of, that accuseth him ! And tell
Sir Loys he is mine, the Church's hope :
Bid him approve himself our Knight indeed !
Lo, this black disemboguing of the Isle !

[To the Druses.] Ah, children, what a sight for these old eyes
That kept themselves alive this voyage through
To smile their very last on you ! I came
To gather one and all you wandering sheep

Into my fold, as tho' a father came . . .
As tho', in coming, a father should . . .

[*To his Guards.*] Ten, twelve,
—Twelve guards of you, and not an outlet ? None ?
The wizards stop each avenue ? Keep close !)
[*To the Druses.*] As if one came to a son's house, I say,
So did I come—no guard with me—to find . . .
Alas—Alas !

A Druse. Who is the old man ?

Another. Oh, ye are to shout !

Children he styles you.

Druses. Ay, the Prefect 's slain !

Glory to the Khalif, our Father !

Nuncio. Even so !

I find (ye prompt aright) your Father slain ;
While most he plotted for your good, that father
(Alas ! how kind, ye never knew)—lies slain !

[*Aside.*] (And Hell's worm gnaw the glozing knave—with me,
For being duped by his cajoleries !

Are these the Christians ? These the docile crew
My bezants went to make me Bishop o'er ?)

[*To his Attendants, who whisper.*] What say ye does this wizard
style himself ?

Hakeem ? Bianirallah ? The third Fatemite ?
What is this jargon ? He—the insane Khalif,
Dead near three hundred years ago, come back
In flesh and blood again ?

Druses. He mutters ! Hear ye ?
He is blaspheming Hakeem. The old man
Is our dead Prefect's friend ! Tear him !

Nuncio. Ye dare not !

I stand here with my five-and-seventy years,
The Patriarch's power behind, and God's above me !
Those years have witnessed sin enough ; ere now
Misguided men arose against their lords,
And found excuse ; but ye, to be enslaved
By sorceries—cheats ;—alas ! the same tricks, tried
On my poor children in this nook of the earth,
Could triumph,—that have been successively
Exploded, laughed to scorn, all nations thro'—

“ *Romaioi, Ioudaioi te kai preselutoi,*
“ Cretes and Arabians”—you are duped the last !
Said I, refrain from tearing me ! I pray ye
Tear me ! Shall I return to tell the Patriarch
That so much love was wasted—every gift
Rejected, from his benison I brought,
Down to the galley-full of bezants, sunk
An hour since at the harbour's mouth, by that . . .

That . . . never will I speak his hated name !

[*To his Servants.*] What was the name his fellow slipfetter
Called their arch-wizard by ? [*they whisper.*] Oh, Djabal
was 't ?

Druses. But how a sorcerer ? false whercin ?

Nuncio. (Ay, Djabal !)

How false ? Ye know not, Djabal has confessed . . .

Nay, that by tokens found on him we learn . . .

What I sailed hither solely to divulge—

How by his spells the demons were allured

To seize you—not that these be aught save lies

And mere illusions. Is this clear ? I say,

By measures such as these, he would have led you

Into a monstrous ruin : follow ye ?

Say, shall ye perish for his sake, my sons ?

Druses. Hark ye !

Nuncio. —Be of one privilege amerced ?

No ! Infinite the Patriarch's mercies be !

No ! With the Patriarch's license, still I bid ye

Tear him to pieces who misled you ! Haste !

Druses. The old man's beard shakes, and his eyes are white fire ! After all, I know nothing of Djabal beyond what Karshook says ; he knows but what Khalil says ; who knows just what Djabal says himself—Now, the little Copt Prophet, I saw at Cairo in my youth, began by promising each bystander three full measures of wheat . . .

Enter KHALIL and the Initiated Druses.

Kha. Venice and her deliverance are at hand !
Their fleet stands thro' the harbour ! Hath he slain
The Prefect yet ? Is Djabal's change come yet ?

Nuncio. [to Attendants.] What's this of Venice ? Who's
this boy ?

[Attendants *whisper.*] One Khalil ?

Djabal's accomplice, Loys called, but now,

The only Druse, save Djabal's self, to fear ?

[*To the Druses.*] I cannot hear ye with these aged ears :

Is it so ? Ye would have my troops assist ?

Doth he abet him in his sorceries ?

Down with the cheat, guards, as my children bid !

[*They spring at KHALIL : as he beats them back, —*
Stay—no more bloodshed—spare deluded youth !

Whom seek'st thou ? (I will teach him)—Whom, my child ?

Thou knowest not what these know, have just told me.

I am an old man, as thou seest—have done

With earth, and what should move me but the truth ?

Art thou the only fond one of thy tribe ?

'Tis I interpret for thy tribe !—

Kha. Oh, this
Is the expected Nuncio ! Druses, hear—
Endure ye this ? Unworthy to partake
The glory Hakeem gains you ! While I speak,
The ships touch land : who makes for Lebanon ?
They'll plant the wingèd lion in these halls !

Nuncio. [Aside.] If it be true ! Venice ?—Oh, never true !
Yet, Venice would so gladly thwart our Knights,
And fain get footing here, so close by Rhodes !
Oh, to be duped this way !

Kha. Ere he appears
To lead you gloriously, repent, I say !

Nuncio. [Aside.] Oh, any way to stretch the arch-wizard stark
Ere the Venetians come ! Were he cut off,
The rest were easily tamed. [To the Druses.] He ? Bring
him forth !
Since so you needs will have it, I assent !
You'd judge him, say you, on the spot ? Confound
The sorcerer in his very circle ? Where's
Our short black-bearded sallow friend who said
He'd earn the Patriarch's guerdon by one stab ?
Bring Djabal forth at once !

Druses. Ay, bring him forth !
The Patriarch drives a trade in oil and silk—
And we're the Patriarch's children—true men, we !
Where is the glory ? Show us all the glory !

Kha. You dare not so insult him ! What, not see . . .
(I tell thee, Nuncio, these are uninstructed,
Untrusted—they know nothing of our Khalif !)
—Not see that if he lets a doubt arise
'Tis but to give yourselves the chance of seeming
To have some influence in your own Return !
That all may say they would have trusted him
Without the all-convincing glory—ay,
And did ! Embrace the occasion, friends ! For, think—
What merit when his change takes place ? But now,
For your sakes, he should not reveal himself
No—could I ask and have, I would not ask
The change yet !

Enter DJABAL and LOYS.

Spite of all, reveal thyself !
I had said, pardon them for me—for Anael—
For our sakes pardon these besotted men—
Ay—for thine own—they hurt not thee ! Yet now
One thought swells in me and keeps down all else !
This Nuncio couples shame with thee, has called

Imposture thy whole course, all bitter things
Has said—he is but an old fretful man !

Hakeem—nay, I must call thee Hakeem now—
Reveal thyself ! See ! Where is Anael ?—See !

Loys. [to Dja.] Here are thy people ! Keep thy word to me !

Dja. Who of my people hath accused me ?

Nuncio. So !

So, this is Djabal, Hakeem, and what not ?

A fit deed, Loys, for thy first Knight's day !

May it be augury of thy after life !

Ever be truncheon of the Church as now

That, Nuncio of the Patriarch, having charge

Of the Isle here, I claim thee [turning to Dja.] as these bid me,

Forfeit for murder on thy lawful prince,

Thou conjurer that peep'st and mutterest !

Why should I hold thee from their hands ? (Spells, children ?
But hear how I dispose of all his spells !)

Thou art a Prophet ?—wouldst entice thy tribe

Away ?—thou workest miracles ? (Attend !

Let him but move me with his spells !) I, Nuncio . . .

Dja. . . . Which how thou can'st to be, I say not now,
Though I have also been at Stamboul, Luke !

—Ply thee with spells, forsooth ! What need of spells ?

If Venice, in her Admiral's person, stoop

To ratify thy compact with her foes,

The Hospitallers, for this Isle—withdraw

Her warrant of the deed which reinstates

My people in their freedom, tricked away

By him I slew,—refuse to convoy us

To Lebanon and keep the Isle we leave—

—Then will be time to try what spells can do !

Dost thou dispute the Republic's power ?

Nuncio. Lo ye !

He tempts me, too, the wily exorcist !

No ! The renowned Republic was and is

The Patriarch's friend : 'tis not for courting Venice

That I—that these implore thy blood of me !

Lo ye, the subtle miscreant ! Ha, so subtle ?

Ye, Druses, hear him ! Will ye be deceived ?

How he evades me ! Where's the miracle

He works ? I bid him to the proof—fish up

Your galley-full of bezants that he sunk !

That were a miracle ! One miracle !

Enough of trifling, for it chafes my age—

I am the Nuncio, Druses ! I stand forth

To save you from the good Republic's rage

When she shall find her fleet was summoned here
To aid the mummeries of this crafty knave !

[*As the Druses hesitate, his Attendants whisper!*

Ah, well suggested ! Why, we hold this while
One, who, his close confederate till now,
Confesses Djabal at the last a cheat,
And every miracle a cheat ! Who throws me
His head ? I make three offers, once I offer,—
And twice . . .

Dja. Let who moves perish at my foot !

Kha. Thanks, Hakeem, thanks ! Oh, Anael, Maani,
Why tarry they ?

Druses [to each other.] He can ! He can ! Live fire—
[*To the Nuncio.*] (I say he can, old man ! Thou know'st him
not—)

Live fire like that thou seest now in his eyes,
Plays fawning round him—See ! The change begins !
All the brow lightens as he lifts his arm !
Look not at me ! It was not I !

Dja. What Druse
Accused me, as he saith ? I bid each bone
Crumble within that Druse ! None, Loys, none
Of my own people, as thou saidst, have raised
A voice against me.

Nuncio. [Aside.] Venice to come ! Death !

Dja. [continuing.] Confess and go unscathed, however false !
Seest thou my Druses, Luke ? I would submit
To thy pure malice did one Druse confess !
How said I, Loys ?

Nuncio [to his Attendants, who whisper.] Ah, ye counsel so ?
[*Aloud.*] Bring in the witness, then, who, first of all,
Disclosed the treason ! Now I have thee, wizard !
Ye hear that ? If one speaks, he bids you tear him
Joint after joint—well, then, one does speak ! One,
Befooled by Djabal, even as yourselves,
But who hath voluntarily proposed
To expiate, by confessing thus, the fault
Of having trusted him. [*They bring in a veiled Druse.*

Loys. Now Djabal, now !

Nuncio. Friend, Djabal fronts you ! (Make a ring, sons !)—

Speak !

Expose this Djabal ; what he was, and how ;
The wiles he used, the aims he cherished ; all,
Explicitly as late you spoke to these
My servants—I absolve and pardon you.

Loys. Thou hast the dagger ready, Djabal ?

Dja. Speak,
Recreant !

Druses. Stand back, fool ! farther ! Suddenly
You shall see some huge serpent glide from under
The empty vest—or down will thunder crash !
Back, Khalil !

Kha. I go back ? Thus go I back !
[To AN.] Unveil ! Nay, thou shalt face the Khalif ! Thus !

[*He tears away ANAEL's veil : DJABAL folds his arms and bows his head : the Druses fall back : LOYS springs from the side of DJABAL and the NUNCIO.*

Loys. Then she was true—she only of them all !
True to her eyes—may keep those glorious eyes,
And now be mine, once again mine ! Oh, Anael !
Dared I think thee a partner in his crime—
That blood could soil that hand ? nay, 'tis mine—Anael
—Not mine ?—Who offer thee before all these
My heart, my sword, my name—so thou wilt say
That Djabal, who affirms thou art his bride,
Lies—say but that he lies !

Dja. Thou, Anael ?

Loys. Nay, Djabal, nay, one chance for me—the last !
Thou hast had every other—thou hast spoken
Days, nights, what falsehood listed thee—let me
Speak first, now ; I will speak, now !—

Nuncio. Loys, pause !
Thou art the Duke's son, Breton's choicest stock—
Loys of Dreux—God's sepulchre's first sword—
This wilt thou spit on, this degrade, this trample
To earth ?

Loys. [to AN.] Ah, who had foreseen, “ One day, Loys
“ Will stake these gifts against some other good
“ In the whole world ? ”—I give them thee ! I would
My strong will might bestow real shape on them,
That I might see, with my own eyes, thy foot
Tread on their very neck ! 'Tis not by gifts
I put aside this Djabal—we will stand—
We do stand—see—two men ! Djabal, stand forth !
Who's worth her—I or thou ? I—who for Anael
Kept, purely, uprightly my way, the long
True way—left thee each by-path—boldly lived
Without the lies and blood,—or thou, or thou ?
I ! Love me, Anael ! Leave the blood and him !
[To DJA.] Now speak—now, quick on this that I have said,—
Thou with the blood, speak if thou art a man !

Dja. [to AN.] And was it thou betrayedst me ? 'Tis well !
I have deserved this of thee, and submit :
Nor 'tis much evil thou inflictest : life
Ends here. The cedars shall not wave for us—
For there was crime, and must be punishment.

See fate ! By thee I was seduced—by thee
 I perish—yet do I, can I repent ?
 I, with my Arab instinct, thwarted ever
 By my Frank policy,—and, within turn,
 My Frank brain, thwarted by my Arab heart—
 While these remained in equipoise, I lived
 —Nothing ; had either been predominant,
 As a Frank schemer or an Arab mystic,
 I had been something ;—now, each has destroyed
 The other—and behold, from out their crash,
 A third and better nature rises up—
 My mere Man's-nature ! And I yield to it—
 I love thee—I—who did not love before !

An. Djabal——

Dja. It seemed love, but true love it was not—
 How could I love while thou adoredst me ?
 Now thou despisest, art above me so
 Immeasurably—thou, no other, doomest
 My death now—this my steel shall execute
 Thy judgment—I shall feel thy hand in it !
 Oh, luxury to worship, to submit,
 Transcended, doomed to death by thee !

An.

Dja. Dost hesitate ? I force thee then ! Approach,
 Druses ! for I am out of reach of fate ;
 No further evil waits me—Speak the truth !
 Hear, Druses, and hear, Nuncio, and hear, Loys !

An. HAKEEM !

[*The Druses scream, grovelling before him.*
She falls dead.
Ah, Hakeem !—not on me thy wrath !
Biamrallah, pardon—never doubted I !
Ah, dog, how sayest thou ?

[*They surround and seize the NUNCIO and his Guards.*
Loys flings himself upon the body of ANAEL,
on which DJABAL continues to gaze as stupefied.

Nuncio. Caitives ! Have ye eyes ?
 Whips, racks, shbuld teach you ! What, his fools ? his dupes ?
 Leave me ! unhand me !

Kha. [*approaching DJABAL timidly.*] Save her for my sake !
 She was already thine—she would have shared
 To-day thine exaltation—think ! this day
 Her hair was plaited thus because of thee—
 Yes, feel the soft bright hair—feel !

Nuncio [*struggling with those who have seized him.*] What, because
 His leman dies for him ? You think it hard
 To die ? Oh, would you were at Rhodes, and choice
 Of deaths should suit you !

Kha. [bending over ANAEL's body.] Just restore her life !
 So little does it—there—the eyelids tremble !
 'Twas not my breath that made them—and the lips
 Move of themselves—I could restore her life !
 Hakeen, we have forgotten—have presumed
 On our free converse—we are better taught.
 See, I kiss—how I kiss thy garment's hem
 For her ! She kisses it—Oh, take her deed
 In mine—Thou dost believe now, Anael ?—See,
 She smiles ! Were her lips open o'er the teeth
 So, when I spoke first ? She believes in thee !
 Go not without her to the Cedars, Lord !
 Or leave us both—I cannot go alone !
 I have obeyed thee, if I dare say so—
 Hath Hakeem thus forgot all Djabal knew ?
 Thou feelest then my tears fall hot and fast
 Upon thy hand—and yet thou speakest not !
 Ere the Venetian trumpet sound—ere thou
 Exalt thyself, O Hakeem ! save her—save her !

Nuncio. And the accursed Republic will arrive
 And find me in their toils—dead, very like,
 Under their feet !

What way—not one way yet
 To foil them ? None ? [Observing DJABAL's face.]
 What ails the Khalif ? Ah,

That ghastly face—a way to foil them yet !
 [To the Druses.] Look to your Khalif, Druses ! Is that face
 God Hakeem's ? Where is triumph—where is . . . what
 Said he of exaltation—hath he promised
 So much to-day ? Why, then, exalt thyself !
 Cast off that husk, thy form, set free thy soul
 In splendour ! Now, bear witness—here I stand—
 I challenge him exalt himself, and I
 Become, for that, a Druse like all of you !

The Druses. Exalt thyself—exalt thyself—O Hakeem !

Dja. [advances.] I can confess now all from first to last.
 There is no longer shame for me ! I am . . .

[Here the Venetian trumpet sounds—the Druses shout :
 his eye catches the expression of those about him,
 and, as the old dream comes back, he is again con-
 fident and inspired.]

. . . Am I not Hakeem ? And ye would have crawled
 But yesterday within these impure courts
 Where now ye stand erect !—Not grand enough ?
 —What more could be conceded to such beasts
 As all of you, so sunk and base as you,
 But a mere man ?—A man among such beasts
 Was miracle enough—yet him you doubt,

Him you forsake, him fain would you destroy—
With the Venetians at your gate, the Nuncio
Thus—(see the baffled hypocrite!) and best
The Prefect there!

Druses. No, Hakeem, ever thine!

Nuncio. He lies—and twice he lies—and thrice he lies!
Exalt thyself, Mahound! Exalt thyself!

Dja. Druses! we shall henceforth be far away!
Out of mere mortal ken—above the Cedars—
But we shall see ye go, hear ye return,
Repeopling the old solitudes,—thro' thee,
My Khalil! Thou art full of me—I fill
Thee full—my hands thus fill thee! Yester eve,
—Nay, but this morn—I deemed thee ignorant
Of all to do, requiring words of mine
To teach it—now, thou hast all gifts in one,
With truth and purity go other gifts!
All gifts come clustering to that—go, lead
My People home whate'er betide!

[*Turning to the Druses.*] Ye take
This Khalil for my delegate? To him
Bow as to me? He leads to Lebanon—
Ye follow?

Druses. We follow! Now exalt thyself!

Dja. [*raises Loys.*] Then to thee, Loys! How I wronged
thee, Loys!
—Yet, wronged, no less thou shalt have full revenge,
Fit for thy noble self, revenge—and thus:
Thou, loaded with these wrongs, the princely soul,
The first sword of Christ's sepulchre—thou shalt
Guard Khalil and my Druses home again!
Justice, no less—God's justice and no more,
For those I leave!—to seeking this, devote
Some few days out of thy Knight's brilliant life!
And, this obtained them, leave their Lebanon,
My Druses' blessing in thine ears—(they shall
Bless thee with blessing sure to have its way)
—One cedar-blossom in thy Ducal cap,
One thought of Anael in thy heart—perchance,
One thought of him who thus, to bid thee speed,
His last word to the living speaks! This done,
Resume thy course, and, first amid the first
In Europe, take my heart along with thee!
Go boldly, go serenely, go augustly—
What can withstand thee then?

[*He bends over ANAEL.*] And last to thee!
Ah, did I dream I was to have this day
Exalted thee? A vain dream—hast thou not

Won greater exaltation ? What remains
But press to thee, exalt myself to thee ?
Thus I exalt myself, set free my soul !

[*He stabs himself—as he falls, supported by KHALIL and Loys, the VENETIANS enter: the ADMIRAL advances.*

Admiral. God and St. Mark for Venice ! Plant the Lion !

[*At the clash of the planted standard, the Druses shout, and move tumultuously forward, Loys drawing his sword.*

Dja. [*leading them a few steps between KHALIL and Loys.*] On to the Mountain. At the Mountain, Druses !

[*Dies.*

LURIA.

A Tragedy.

I DEDICATE

THE LAST ATTEMPT FOR THE PRESENT AT DRAMATIC POETRY

To a Great Dramatic Poet;

"WISHING WHAT I WRITE MAY BE READ BY HIS LIGHT;"

—IF A PHRASE ORIGINALLY ADDRESSED BY NOT THE LEAST WORTHY
OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES,

TO SHAKESPEARE,

MAY BE APPLIED HERE, BY ONE WHOSE SOLE PRIVILEGE IS IN A
GRATEFUL ADMIRATION,

TO WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

LURIA.

PERSONS.

LURIA, a Moor, Commander of the Florentine Forces.

HUSA:N, a Moor, his friend.

PUCCHIO, the old Florentine Commander, now LURIA's Chief Officer.

BRACCIO, Commissary of the Republic of Florence.

JACOPO (LAPO), his Secretary.

TIBURZIO, Commander of the Pisans.

DOMIZIA, a noble Florentine Lady.

Time, 14—,

SCENE.—LURIA's *Camp between Florence and Pisa.*

ACT I.

MORNING.

BRACCIO, as dictating to his Secretary; PUCCHIO standing by.

Brao. [to Puc.] Then, you join battle in an hour?

Puc. Not I;

Luria, the Captain.

Brac. [to the Sec.] "In an hour, the battle."

[To Puc.] Sir, let your eye run o'er this loose digest,
And see if very much of your report
Have slipped away through my civilian phrase.
Does this instruct the Signory aright
How army stands with army?

Puc. [taking the paper.] All seems here:
—That Luria, seizing with our City's force

The several points of vantage, hill and plain,
Shuts Pisa safe from help on every side,
And baffling the Lucchese arrived too late,
Must, in the battle he delivers now,
Beat her best troops and first of chiefs,

Brac.

So sure ?

Tiburzio's a consummate captain too !

Puc. Luria holds Pisa's fortune in his hand.

Brac. [to the Sec.] "The Signory hold Pisa in their hand!"
Your own proved soldiership's our warrant, sir :
So, while my secretary ends his task,
Have out two horsemen, by the open roads,
To post with it to Florence !

Puc. [returning the paper.] All seems here ;
Unless . . . Ser Braccio, 'tis my last report !
Since Pisa's outbreak, and my overthrow,
And Luria's hastening at the city's call
To save her, as he only could, no doubt ;
Till now that she is saved or sure to be,—
Whatever you tell Florence, I tell you :
Each day's note you, her Commissary, make
Of Luria's movements, I myself supply.
No youngster am I longer, to my cost ;
Therefore while Florence gloried in her choice
And vaunted Luria, whom but Luria, still.
As if zeal, courage, prudence, conduct, faith,
Had never met in any man before,
I saw no pressing need to swell the cry.

But now, this last report and I have done—
So, ere to-night comes with its roar of praise,
'Twere not amiss if some one old i' the trade
Subscribed with, "True, for once rash counsel's best ;
"This Moor of the bad faith and doubtful race,
"This boy to whose untried sagacity,
"Raw valour, Florence trusts without reserve
"The charge to save her, justifies her choice ;
"In no point has this stranger failed his friends ;
"Now praise!" I say this, and it is not here.

Brac. [to the Sec.] Write, "Puccio, superseded in the charge
"By Luria, bears full witness to his worth,
"And no reward our Signory can give
"Their champion but he'll back it cheerfully."
Aught more? Five minutes hence, both messengers!

[*Puccio goes.*

Brac. [after a pause, and while he slowly tears the paper
into shreds.]

I think . . . pray God, I hold in fit contempt
This warfare's noble art and ordering,

And,—once the brace of prizers fairly matched,
 Poleaxe with poleaxe, knife with knife as good,—
 Spit properly at what men term their skill . . .
 Yet here I think our fighter has the odds ;
 With Pisa's strength diminished thus and thus,
 Such points of vantage in our hands and such,
 With Lucca off the stage, too,—all's assured :
 Luria must win this battle. Write the Court,
 That Luria's trial end and sentence pass !

Sec. Patron,—

Brac. Ay, Lapo ?

Sec. If you trip, I fall ;

'Tis in self-interest I speak——

Brac. Nay, nay,

You overshoot the mark, my Lapo ! Nay !
 When did I say pure love 's impossible ?
 I make you daily write those red cheeks thin,
 Load your young brow with what concerns it least,
 And, when we visit Florence, let you pace
 The Piazza by my side as if we talked,
 Where all your old acquaintances may see :
 You 'd die for me, I should not be surprised !
 Now then !

Sec. Sir, look about and love yourself !
 Step after step the Signory and you
 Tread gay till this tremendous point 's to pass ;
 Which, pass not, pass not, ere you ask yourself,
 Bears the brain steadily such draughts of fire,
 Or too delicious may not prove the pride
 Of this long secret Trial you dared plan,
 Dare execute, you solitary here,
 With the grey-headed toothless fools at home,
 Who think themselves your lords, they are such slaves ?
 If they pronounce this sentence as you bid,
 Declare the treason, claim its penalty,—
 And sudden out of all the blaze of life,
 On the best minute of his brightest day,
 From that adoring army at his back,
 Thro' Florence' joyous crowds before his face,
 Into the dark you beckon Luria . . .

Brac. Then—

Why, Lapo, when the fighting-people vaunt,
 We of the other craft and mystery,
 May we not smile demure, the danger past ?

Sec. Sir, no, no, no,—the danger, and your spirit
 At watch and ward ? Where 's danger on your part,
 With that thin flitting instantaneous steel,
 'Gainst the blind bull-front of a brute-force world ?

If Luria, that's to perish sure as fate,
Should have been really guiltless after all ?

Brac. Ah, you have thought that ?

Sec. Here I sit, your scribe,
And in and out goes Luria, days and nights ;
This Puccio comes ; the Moor his other friend,
Husain ; they talk—all that's feigned easily ;
He speaks (I would not listen if I could)
Reads, orders, counsels ;—but he rests sometimes,—
I see him stand and eat, sleep stretched an hour
On the lynx-skins, yonder ; hold his bared black arms
Into the sun from the tent-opening ; laugh
When his horse drops the forage from his teeth
And neighs to hear him hum his Moorish songs,
That man believes in Florence, as the Saint
Tied to the wheel believes in God !

Brac. How strange—
You too have thought that !

Sec. Do but you think too,
And all is saved ! I only have to write,
The man seemed false awhile, proves true at last ;
Bury it . . . so I write to the Signory . . .
Bury this Trial in your breasts for ever,
Blot it from things or done or dreamed about,
So Luria shall receive his meed to-day
With no suspicion what reverse was near,—
As if no meteoric finger hushed
The doom-word just on the destroyer's lip.
Motioned him off, and let life's sun fall straight.

Brac. [looks to the wall of the tent.] Did he draw that ?

Sec. With charcoal, when the watch
Made the report at midnight ; Lady Domizia
Spoke of the unfinished Duomo, you remember ;
That is his fancy how a Moorish front
Might join to, and complete, the body,—a sketch,—
And again where the cloak hangs, yonder in the shadow.

Brac. He loves that woman.

Sec. She is sent the spy
Of Florence,—spies on you as you on him :
Florence, if only for Domizia's sake,
Is surely safe. What shall I write ?

Brac. I see—
A Moorish front, nor of such ill design !
Lapo, there's one thing plain and positive ;
Man seeks his own good at the whole world's cost.
What ? If to lead our troops, stand forth our chiefs,
And hold our fate, and see us at their beck,
Yet render up the charge when peace returned,

Have ever proved too much for Florentines,
 Even for the best and bravest of ourselves—
 If in the struggle when the soldier's sword
 Should sink its point before the statist's pen,
 And the calm head replace the violent hand,
 Virtue on virtue still have fallen away
 Before ambition with unvarying fate,
 Till Florence' self at last in bitterness
 Be forced to own such falls the natural end,
 And, sparing further to expose her sons
 To a vain strife and profitless disgrace,
 Declare “The Foreigner, one not my child,
 “ Shall henceforth lead my troops, reach height by height
 “ The glory, then descend into the shame ;
 “ So shall rebellion be less guilt in him,
 “ And punishment the easier task for me ”
 —If on the best of us this brand she set,
 Can I suppose an utter alien here,
 This Luria, our inevitable foe,
 Confessed a mercenary and a Moor,
 Born free from any ties that bind the rest
 Of common faith in Heaven or hope on Earth,
 No Past with us, no Future,—such a Spirit
 Shall hold the path from which our staunchest broke,
 Stand firm where every famed precursor fell ?
 My Lapo, I will frankly say, these proofs
 So duly noted of the man's intent,
 Are for the doting fools at home, not me ;
 The charges here, they may be true or false,
 —What is set down ? Errors and oversights,
 This dallying interchange of courtesies
 With Pisa's General,—all that, hour by hour,
 Puccio's pale discontent has furnished us,
 Of petulant speeches, inconsiderate acts,
 Now overhazard, overcaution now ;
 Even that he loves this Lady who believes
 She outwits Florence, and whom Florence posted
 By my procurement here, to spy on me,
 Lest I one minute lose her from my sight—
 She who, remembering her whole House's fall,
 That nest of traitors strangled in the birth,
 Now labours to make Luria . . . poor device
 As plain . . . the instrument of her revenge !
 —That she is ever at his ear to prompt
 Inordinate conceptions of his worth,
 Exorbitant belief in its reward,
 And after, when sure disappointmen' follows,
 Proportionable rage at such a wrong—

Why, all these reasons, while I urge them most,
 Weigh with me less than least ; as nothing weigh !
 Upon that broad Man's heart of his, I go !
 On what I know must be, yet while I live
 Will never be, because I live and know !
 Brute-force shall not rule Florence ! Intellect
 May rule her, bad or good as chance supplies,—
 But Intellect it shall be, pure if bad,
 And Intellect's tradition sc kept up
 Till the good comes—'twas Intellect that ruled,
 Not Brute-force bringing from the battle-field
 The attributes of wisdom, foresight's graces
 We lent it there to lure its grossness on ;
 All which it took for earnest and kept safe
 To show against us in our market-place,
 Just as the plumes and tags and swordsman's gear
 (Fetched from the camp where at their foolish best
 When all was done they frightened nobody)
 Perk in our faces in the street, forsooth,
 With our own warrant and allowance. No !
 The whole procedure's overcharged,—its end
 In too strict keeping with the bad first step.
 To conquer Pisa was sheer inspiration ?
 Well, then, to perish for a single fault,
 Let that be simple justice !—There, my Lapo !
 A Moorish front ill suits our Duomo's body—
 Blot it out—and bid Luria's sentence come !

[*Luria, who, with Domizia, has entered unobserved at the close of the last phrase, now advancing,—*

And Luria, Luria, what of Luria now ?

Brac. Ah, you so close, sir ? Lady Domizia too ?
 I said it needs must be a busy moment
 For one like you—that you were now i' the thick
 Of your duties, doubtless, while we idlers sate . . .

Lur. No—in that paper,—it was in that paper
 What you were saying !

Brac. Oh—my day's dispatch !
 I censure you to Florence : will you see ?

Lur. See your dispatch, your last, for the first time ?
 Well, if I should, now ? For in truth, Domizia,
 He would be forced to set about another,
 In his sly, cool way, the true Florentine,
 To mention that important circumstance ;
 So while he wrote I should gain time, such time !
 Do not send this !

Brac. * * * And wherefore ?

Lur. These Luccheses

Are not arrived—they never will arrive !
 And I must fight to-day, arrived or not ;
 And I shall beat Tiburzio, that is sure :
 And then will be arriving my Lucchese,
 But slowly, oh, so slowly, just in time
 To look upon my battle from the hills,
 Like a late moon, of use to nobody !
 And I must break my battle up, send forth,
 Surround on this side, hold in check on that—
 Then comes to-morrow, we negotiate,
 You make me send for fresh instructions home,
 —Incompleteness, incompleteness !

Brac.

Ah, we scribes !

Why, I had registered that very point,
 The non-appearance of our foes' ally,
 As a most happy fortune ; both at once
 Were formidable—singly faced, each falls.

Lur. So no great battle for my Florentines !
 No crowning deed, decisive and complete,
 For all of them, the simple as the wise,
 Old, young, alike, that do not understand
 Our wearisome pedantic art of war,
 By which we prove retreat may be success,
 Delay—best speed,—half loss, at times,—whole gain :
 They want results—as if it were their fault !
 And you, with warmest wish to be my friend,
 Will not be able now to simply say
 “ Your servant has performed his task—enough !
 “ You ordered, he has executed : good !
 “ Now walk the streets in holiday attire,
 “ Congratulate your friends, till noon strikes fierce,
 “ Then form bright groups beneath the Dromo's shade !”
 No ! you will have to argue and explain,
 Persuade them all is not so ill in the end,
 Tease, tire them out ! Arrive, arrive, Lucchese !

Dom. Well, you will triumph for the Past enough,
 Whatever be the Present's chance—no service
 Falls to the ground with Florence ; she awaits
 Her saviour, will receive him fittingly.

Lur. Ah, Braccio, you know Florence . . . will she, think
 you,
 Receive one . . . what means “ fittingly receive ” ?
 —Receive compatriots, doubtless—I am none :
 And yet Domizia promises so much !

Brac. Kind women still give men a woman's prize.
 I know not o'er which gate most boughs will arch,
 Nor if the Square will wave red flags or blue—
 I should have judged, the fullest of rewards

Our State gave Luria, when she made him chief
Of her whole force, in her best Captain's place.

Lur. That my reward ? Florence on my account
Relieved Ser Puccio ?—mark you, my reward !
And Puccio's having all the fight's true joy—
Goes here and there, directs, may fight himself,
While I must order, stand aloof, o'erseeo !
That was my calling—there was my true place !
I should have felt, in some one over me,
Florence impersonate, my visible Head,
As I am over Puccio,—taking life
Directly from her eye !—They give me you !
But do you cross me, set me half to work ?
I enjoy nothing—but I will, for once !
Decide, shall we join battle ? may I wait ?

Brac. Let us compound the matter ; wait till noon;
Then, no arrival,—

Lur. Ah, noon comes too fast !
I wonder, do you guess why I delay
Involuntarily the final blow
As long as possible ? Peace follows it !
Florence at peace, and the calm studious heads
Come out again, the penetrating eyes ;
As if a spell broke, all's resumed, each art
You boast, more vivid that it slept awhile !
Gainst the glad heaven, o'er the white palace-front
The interrupted scaffold climbs anew ;
The walls are peopled by the Painter's brush ;
The Statue to its niche ascends to dwell ;
The Present's noise and trouble have retired
And left the eternal Past to rule once more.—
You speak its speech and read its records plain,
Greece lives with you, each Roman breathes your friend.
—But Luria—where will then be Luria's place ?

Dom. Highest in honour, for that Past's own sake,
Of which his actions, sealing up the sum
By saving all that went before from wreck,
Will range as part, with which be worshipped too.

Lur. Then I may walk and watch you in your streets
Leading the life my rough life helps no more,
So different, so new, so beautiful—
Nor fear that you will tire to see parade
The club that slew the lion, now that crooks
And shepherd-pipes come into use again ?
For very lone and silent seems my East
In its drear vastness—still it spreads, and still
No Braccios, no Domizias anywhere—
Not ever more !—Well, well, to-day is ours !

Dom. [to BRAC.] Should he not have been one of us
Lur. Oh, no !

Not one of you, and so escape the thrill
 Of coming into you, and changing thus,—
 Feeling a soul grow on me that restricts
 The boundless unrest of the savage heart !
 The sea heaves up, hangs loaded o'er the land,
 Breaks there and buries its tumultuous strength ;
 Horror, and silence, and a pause awhile ;
 Lo, inland glides the gulf-stream, miles away,
 In rapture of assent, subdued and still,
 'Neath those strange banks, those unimagined skies !
 Well, 'tis not sure the quiet lasts for ever !
 Your placid heads still find our hands new work ;
 Some minutes' chance—there comes the need of mine—
 And, all resolved on, I too hear at last.
 Oh, you must find some use for me, Ser Braccio !
 You hold my strength ; 'twere best dispose of it !
 What you created, see that you find food for—
 I shall be dangerous else !

Brac. How dangerous, sir ?

Lur. Oh, there are many ways, Domizia warns me,
 And one with half the power that I possess
 Grows very formidable ! Do you doubt ?
 Why, first, who holds the army . . .

Dom. While we talk
 Morn wears, we keep you from your proper place
 In the field !—

Lur. Nay, to the field I move no more !
 My part is done, and Puccio's may begin !
 I cannot trench upon his province longer
 With any face.—You think yourselves so safe ?
 Why see—in concert with Tiburzio, now—
 One could . . .

Dom. A trumpet !

Lur. My Lucchese at last !
 Arrived, as sure as Florence stands ! your leave !

[*Spring*s out.]

Dom. How plainly is true greatness charactered
 By such unconsciousness as Luria's here,
 And sharing least the secret of itself !
 Be it with head that schemes or hand that acts,
 Such save the world which none but they could save,
 Yet think whate'er they did, that world could do.

Brac. Yes : and how worthy note, that those same great ones
 In hand or head, with such unconsciousness
 And all its due entailed humility,
 Should never shrink, so far as I perceive,

From taking up whatever offices
 Involve the whole world's safety or mishap,
 Into their mild hands as a thing of course !
 The Statist finds it natural to lead
 The mob who might as easily lead him—
 The Soldier marshals men who know as much—
 Statist and Soldier verily believe !
 While we poor scribes . . . you catch me thinking, now,
 That I shall in this very letter write
 What none of you are able ! To it, Lapo ! [DOMIZIA goes]
 This last, worst, all affected childish fit
 Of Luria's, this be-praised unconsciousness,
 Convinces me : the Past was no child's play ;
 It was a man beat Pisa,—not a child.
 All 's mere dissimulation—to remove
 The fear, he best knows we should entertain.
 The utmost danger was at hand. Is 't written ?
 Now make a duplicate, lest this should fail,
 And speak your fullest on the other side.
Sic. I noticed he was busily repairing
 My half-effacement of his Duomo sketch,
 And, while he spoke of Florence, turned to it,
 As the Mage Negro King to Christ the Babe.—
 I judge his childishness the true relapse
 To boyhood of a man who has worked lately,
 And presently will work, so, meantime, plays :
 Whence more than ever I believe in him.
Brac. [after a pause.] The sword ! At best, the soldier, as
 he says,
 In Florence—the black face, the barbarous name,
 For Italy to boast her show of the age,
 Her man of men !—To Florence with each letter !

ACT II.

NOON.

Dom. Well, Florence, shall I reach thee, pierce thy heart
 Thro' all its safeguards ? Hate is said to help—
 Quicken the eye, invigorate the arm,
 And this my hate, made up of many hates,
 Might stand in scorn of visible instrument,
 And will thee dead :—yet do I trust it not.
 Nor Man's devices, nor Heaven's memory
 Of wickedness forgot on Earth so soon,

But thy own nature,—Hell and thee I trust,
 To keep thee constant in that wickedness,
 Where my revenge may meet thee: turn aside
 A single step, for gratitude, or shame,—
 Grace but this Luria, this wild mass of rage
 That I prepare to launch against thee now,
 With other payment than thy noblest found,—
 Give his desert for once its due reward,—
 And past thee would my sure destruction roll.
 But thou, who mad'st our House thy sacrifice,
 It cannot be thou wilt except this Mcor
 From the accustomed fate of zeal and truth;
 Thou wilt deny his looked-for recompense,
 And then—I reach thee! Old and trained, my sire
 Could bow down on his quiet broken heart,
 Die awe-struck and subinmissive, when at last
 The strange blow came for the expected wreach;
 And Porzio passed in blind bewilderment
 To exile, never to return,—they say,
 Perplexed in his frank, simple honest soul,
 As if some natural law had changed,—how else
 Could Florence, on plain fact pronouncing thus,
 Judge Porzio's actions worthy such an end?
 But Berto, with the ever-passionate pulse,
 —Oh that long night, its dreadful hour on hour,
 In which no way of getting his fair fame
 From their inexplicable charges free,
 Was found, save pouring forth the impatient blood
 To show its colour whether false or no!
 My brothers never had a friend like me
 Close in their need to watch the time, then speak,
 —Burst with a wakening laughter on their dream,
 Say, Florence was all falseness, so false here,—
 And show them what a simple task remained—
 To leave dreams, rise, and punish in God's name
 The City wedded to its wickedness—
 None stood by them as I by Luria stand!
 So, when the stranger cheated of his due
 Turns on thee as his rapid nature bids,
 Then, Florence, think, a hireling at thy throat
 For the first outrage, think who bore thy last,
 Yet mutely in forlorn obedience died!
 He comes . . . his friend . . . black faces in the camp
 Where moved those peerless brows and eyes of old!

Enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Dom. Well, and the movement—is it as you hope?
 'Tis Lucca?

Lur. Ah, the Pisan trumpet merely
Tiburzio's envoy, I must needs receive—

Dom. Whom I withdraw before ; yet if I lingered
You could not wonder, for my time fleets fast ;
The overtaking night brings such reward !—
And where will then be room for me ? Yet still
Remember who was first to promise it,
And envies those who also can perform !

[Goes.]

Lur. This trumpet from the Pisans ?—

Hus. In the camp ;

A very noble presence—Braccio's visage
On Puccio's body—calm and fixed and good ;
A man I seem as I had seen before—
Most like, it was some statue had the face.

Lur. Admit him ! This will prove the last delay !

Hus. Ay, friend, go on, and die thou going on !
Thou heard'st what the grave woman said but now :
To-night rewards thee ! That is well to hear !
But stop not therefore ; hear it, and go on !

Lur. Oh, their reward and triumph and the rest
They round me in the ears with, all day long ?
All that, I never take for earnest, friend !
Well would it suit us,—their triumphal arch
Or storied pillar,—thee and me, the Moors !
But gratitude in those Italian eyes—
That, we shall get ?

Hus. It is too cold an air—
Our sun rose out of yonder mound of mist—
Where is he now ? So I trust none of them !

Lur. Truly ?

Hus. I doubt and fear. There stands a wall
'Twixt our expansive and explosive race
And those absorbing, concentrating men !
They use thee !

Lur. And I feel it, Huasin ; yes,
And care not—yes, an alien force like mine
Is only called to play its part outside
Their different nature ; where its sole use seems
To fight with and keep off an aduerso force
As alien,—which repelled, mine too withdraws ;
Inside, they know not what to do with me ;
So I have told them laughingly and oft,
But long since I prepared to learn the worst.

Hus. What is the worst ?

Lur. I will forestall them, Husain
And speak my destiny, they dare not speak—
Banish myself before they find the heart !
I will be first to say, "The work rewards'

" I know, for all your praise, my use is over,
 " So may it be !—meanwhile 'tis best I go,
 " And carry safe my memories of you all
 " To other scenes of action, newer lands,"—
 Thus leaving them confirmed in their belief
 They would not easily have tired of me !
 You think this hard to say ?

Hus. Say it or not,
 So thou but go, so they but let thee go !
 This hating people, that hate each the other,
 And in one blandness to us Moors unite—
 Locked each to each like slippery snakes, I say,
 Which still in all their tangles, hissing tongue
 And threatening tail, ne'er do each other harm ;
 While any creature of a better blood,
 They seem to fight for, while they circle safe
 And never touch it,—pines without a wound,
 Withers away before their eyes and breath.
 See thou, if Puccio come not safely out
 Of Braccio's grasp, this Braccio sworn his foe,
 As Braccio safely from Domizia's toils,
 Who hates him most !—But thou, the friend of all,
 . . . Come out of them !

Lur. The Pisan trumpet now !

Hus. Breathe free—it is an enemy, no friend !

[Goes.]

Lur. He keeps his instincts, no new culture mars
 Their perfect use in him ; just so the brutes
 Rest not, are anxious without visible cause,
 When change is in the elements at work,
 Which man's trained senses fail to apprehend.
 But here,—he takes the distant chariot-wheels
 For thunder, festal fire for lightning's flash,
 The finer traits of cultivated life
 For treachery and malevolence : I see !

Enter TIBURZIO.

Lur. Quick, sir, your message. I but wait your message
 To sound the charge. You bring not overtures
 For truce ?—I would not, for your General's sake,
 You spoke of truce—a time to fight is come,
 And whatsoe'er the fight's event, he keeps
 His honest soldier's name to beat me with,
 Or leaves me all himself to beat, I trust !

Tib. I am Tiburzio,

Lur. You ? 'Tis—yes . . . Tiburzio !
 You were the last to keep the ford i' the valley
 From Puccio, when I threw in succours there !
 Why, I was on the heights—thro' the defile

Ten minutes after, when the prey was lost ;
 You wore an open scull-cap with a twist
 Of water-reeds—the plumie being hewn away ;
 While I drove down my battle from the heights,
 —I saw with my own eyes !

Tib. And you are Luria
 Who sent my cohort, that laid down its arms
 In error of the battle-signal's sense,
 Back safely to me at the critical time—
 One of a hundred deeds—I know you ! Therefore
 To none but you could I . . .

Lur. No truce, Tiburzio !

Tib. Luria, you know the peril's imminent
 On Pisa,—that you have us in the toils,
 Us her last safeguard, all that intercepts
 The rage of her implacablest of foes
 From Pisa,—if we fall to-day, she falls.
 Tho' Lucca will arrive, yet, 'tis too late.
 You have so plainly here the best of it,
 That you must feel, brave soldier as you are,
 How dangerous we grow in this extreme,
 How truly formidable by despair.
 Still, probabilities should have their weight—
 The extremest chance is ours, but, that chance failing,
 You win this battle. Wherefore say I this ?
 To be well apprehended when I add,
 This danger absolutely comes from you.
 Were you, who threaten thus, a Florentine . . .

Lur. Sir, I am nearer Florence than her sons.
 I can, and have perhaps obliged the State,
 Nor paid a mere son's duty.

Tib. Even so !
 Were you the son of Florence, yet endued
 With all your present nobleness of soul,
 No question, what I must communicate
 Would not detach you from her.

Lur. Me, detach ?
Tib. Time urges : you will ruin presently
 Pisa, you never knew, for Florence's sake
 You think you know. I kave from time to time
 Made prize of certain secret missives sent
 From Braccio here, the Commissary, home—
 And knowing Florence otherwise, I piece
 The entire chain out, from these its scattered links.
 Your trial occupies the Signory ;
 They sit in judgment on your conduct now !
 When men at home enquire into the acts
 Which in the field e'en foes appreciate . . .

Brief, they are Florentines ! You, saving them,
Will seek the sure destruction saviours find.

Lur. Tiburzio—

Tib. All the wonder is of course !

I am not here to teach you, nor direct,
Only to loyally apprise—scarce that.
This is the latest letter, sealed and safe
As it left here an hour ago. One way
Of two thought free to Florence, I command.
The duplicate is on its road : but this,—
Read it, and then I shall have more to say.

Lur. Florence !

Tib. Now, were yourself a Florentine,
This letter, let it hold the worst it can,
Would be no reason you should fall away—
The Mother city is the mother still,
And recognition of the children's service
Her own affair ; reward—there 's no reward
But you are bound by quite another tie ;
Nor Nature shows, nor Reason, why at first
A foreigner, born friend to all alike,
Should give himself to any special State
More than another, stand by Florence' side
Rather than Pisa's—'tis as fair a city
You war against as that you fight for—famed
As well as she in story, graced no less
With noble heads and patriotic hearts,—
Nor to a stranger's eye would either cause,
Stripped of the cumulative loves and hates
Which take importance from familiar view,
Stand as the Right, and Sole to be upheld.
Therefore, should the preponderating gift
Of love and trust, Florence was first to throw,
Which made you hers not Pisa's, void the scale,—
Old ties dissolving, things resume their place
And all begins again. Break seal and read !
At least let Pisa offer for you now !
And I, as a good Pisan, shall rejoice—
Tho' for myself I lose, in gaining you,
This last fight and its opportunity ;
The chance it brings of saving Pisa yet,
Or in the turn of battle dying so
That shame should want its extreme bitterness.

Lur. Tiburzio, you that fight for Pisa now
As I for Florence . . . say my chance were yours !
You read this letter, and you find . . no, no !
Too mad !

Tib I read the letter, find they purpose

When I have crushed their foe, to crush me : well ?

Lur. You, being their captain, what is it you do ?

Tib. Why, as it is, all cities are alike—

Pisa will pay me much as Florence you ;

I shall be as belied, whate'er the event,

As you, or more : my weak head, they will say,

Prompted this last expedient, my faint heart

Entailed on them indelible disgrace,

Both which defects ask proper punishment.

Another tenure of obedience, mine !

You are no son of Pisa's : break and read !

Lur. And act on what I read ? What act were fit ?

If the firm-fixed foundation of my faith

In Florence, which to me stands for Mankind,

—If that breaks up and, disemprisoning

From the abyss . . . Ah, friend, it cannot be !

You may be very sage, yet . . . all the world

Having to fail, or your sagacity,

You do not wish to find yourself alone

What would the world be worth ? Whose love be sure ?

The world remains—you are deceived !

Tib. Your hand !

I lead the vanguard.—If you fall, beside,

The better—I am left to speak ! For me,

This was my duty, nor would I rejoice

If I could help, it misses its effect :

And after all you will look gallantly

Found dead here with that letter in your breast !

Lur. Tiburzio—I would see these people once

And test them ere I answer finally !

At your arrival let the trumpet sound :

If mine returns not then the wonted cry,

It means that I believe—am Pisa's !

Tib.

Well !

[Goes

Lur. My heart will have it he speaks true ! My blood

Beats close to this Tiburzio as a friend.

If he had stept into my watch-tent, night

And the wild desert full of foes around,

I should have broke the bread and given the salt

Secure, and, when my hour of watch was done,

Taken my turu to sleep between his knees,

Safe in the untroubled brow and honest check.

Oh, world, where all things pass and nought abides,

Oh, life, the long reputation—is it so ?

Is it with life as with the body's change ?

—Where, e'en tho' better follow, good must pass.

Nor manhood's strength can mate with boyhood's grace,

Nor age's wisdom, in its turn, find strength,

But silently the first gift dies away,
 And tho' the new stays, never both at once !
 Life's time of savage instinct's o'er with me,
 It fades and dies away, past trusting more,
 As if to punish the ingratitude
 With which I turned to grow in these new lights,
 And learned to look with European eyes.
 Yet it is better, this cold certain way,
 Where Braccio's brow tells nothing,—Puccio's mouth,
 Domizia's eyes reject the searcher—yes—
 For on their calm sagacity I lean,
 Their sense of right, deliberato choice of good,
 Sure, as they know my deeds, they deal with me.
 Yes, that is better—that is best of all !
 Such faith stays when mere wild belief would go
 Yes—when the desert creature's heart, at fault
 Amid the scattering tempest's pillared sands,
 Betrays its steps into the pathless drift—
 The calm instructed eye of man holds fast
 By the sole bearing of the visible star,
 Sure that when slow the whirling wreck subsides,
 The boundaries, lost now, shall be found again,—
 The palm-trees and the pyramid over all.
 Yes : I trust Florence—Pisa is deceived !

Enter BRACCIO, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Brac. Noon's at an end : no Lucca ? You must fight.

Lur. Do you remember ever, gentle friends,
 I am no Florentine ?

Dom. It is yourself
 Who still are forcing us importunately,
 To bear in mind what else we should forget.
Lur. For loss !—For what I lose in being none !
 No shrewd man, such as you yourselves respect,
 But would remind you of the stranger's loss
 In natural friends and advocates at home,
 Hereditary loves, even rivalships,
 With precedents for honour and reward.

Still, there 's a gain too ! If you take it so,
 The stranger's lot has special gain as well !
 Do you forget there was my own far East
 I might have given away myself to, once,
 As now to Florence, and for such a gift,
 Stood there like a descended Deity ?

There, worship greets us ! what do I get here ?

[Shows the letter.]

See ! Chance has put into my hand the means
 Of knowing what I earn, before I work !

Should I fight better, should I fight the worse,
 With your crown palpably before me ? see !
 Here lies my whole reward ! Best know it now,
 Or keep it for the end's entire delight ?

Brac. If you serve Florence as the vulgar serve,
 For swordsman's pay alone,—break seal and read !
 In that case you will find your full desert !

Lur. Give me my one last happy moment, friends !
 You need me now, and all the gratitude
 This letter can contain will never balance
 The after-feeling that your need's at end !
 This moment . . . Oh, the East has use with you !
 Its sword still flashes—is not flung aside
 With the past praise, in a dark corner yet !
 How say you ? 'Tis not so with Florentines—
 Captains of yours—for them, the ended war
 Is but a first step to the peace begun
 —He who did well in war, just earns the right
 To begin doing well in peace, you know !
 And certain my precursors,—would not such
 Look to themselves in such a chance as this,
 Secure the ground they trod upon, perhaps ?
 For I have heard, by fits, or seemed to hear,
 Of strange occurrences, ingratitude,
 Treachery even,—say that one of you
 Surmised this letter carried what might turn
 To harm hereafter, cause him prejudice—
 What would he do ?

Dom. [hastily.] Thank God and take revenge !
 Turn her own force against the city straight,
 And even at the moment when the foe
 Sounded defiance . . .

[TIBURZIO's trumpet sounds in the distance.

Lur. Ah, you Florentines !
 So would you do ? Wisely for you, no doubt !
 My simple Moorish instinct bids me sink
 The obligation you relieve me from,
 Still deeper ! [to Puc.] Sound our answer, I should say !
 And thus :—[tearing the paper] —The battle ! That solves
 every doubt !

ACT III.

AFTERNOON.

Puccio, as making a report to Jacopo.

Puc. And here, your Captain must report the rest ;
 For, as I say, the main engagement over,
 And Luria's special part in it performed,
 How could subalterns like myself expect
 Leisure or leave to occupy the field
 And glean what dropped from his wide harvesting ?
 I thought, when Lucca at the battle's end
 Came up, just as the Pisan centre broke,
 That Luria would detach me and prevent
 The flying Pisans seeking what they found,
 Friends in the rear, a point to rally by :
 But no—more honourable proved my post !
 I had the august captive to escort
 Safe to our camp—some other could pursue,
 Fight, and be famous ; gentler chance was mine—
 Tiburzio's wounded spirit must be soothed !
 He's in the tent there.

Jac. Is the substance down ?
 I write—"The vanguard beaten, and both wings
 In full retreat—Tiburzio prisoner"—
 And now,—“That they fell back and formed again
 On Lucca's coming.”—Why then, after all,
 'Tis half a victory, no conclusive one ?

Puc. Two operations where a sole had served.*Jac.* And Luria's fault was—?

Puc. Oh, for fault . . . not much !
 He led the attack, a thought impetuously,
 —There's commonly more prudence ; now, he seemed
 To hurry measures, otherwise well-judged ;
 By over-concentrating strength, at first,
 Against the enemy's van, both sides escaped :
 That's reparable—yet it is a fault.

Enter Braccio.

Jac. As good as a full victory to Florence,
 With the advantage of a fault beside—
 What is it, Puccio ?—that by pressing forward
 With too impetuous . . .

Brac. The report anon !

Thanks, sir—you have elsewhere a charge, I know.

[PUCCIO goes.]

There's nothing done but I would do again ;
Yet, Lapo, it may be the Past proves nothing,
And Luria has kept faithful to the end !

Jac. I was for waiting.

Brac.

Yes : so was not I !

He could not choose but tear that letter—true !
Still, certain of his tones, I mind, and looks—
You saw, too, with a fresher soul than I.
So, Porzio seemed an injured man, they say !
Well, I have gone upon the broad, sure ground.

Enter Luria, Puccio, and Domizia.

Lur. [to Puc.] Say, at his pleasure I will see Tiburzio :
All's at his pleasure.

Dom. [to Lur.] Were I not so sure
You would reject, as you do constantly,
Praise,—I might tell you what you have deserved
Of Florence by this last and crowning feat :
But words are vain !

Lur. Nay, you may praise me now !
I want instruction every hour, I find,
On points where once I saw least need of it ;
And praise I have been used to do without,
Seems not so easy to dispense with now,
After a battle half one's strength is gone—
And glorious passion in us once appeased,
Our reason's calm, cold, dreadful voice begins.
All justice, power and beauty scarce appear
Monopolized by Florence, as of late,
To me, the stranger ; you, no doubt, may know
Why Pisa needs must give her rival place ;
And I am growing nearer you, perhaps,
For I, too, want to know and be assured,
When a cause ceases to reward itself,
Its friend needs fresh sustainments ; praise is one,
And here stand you—you, Lady, praise me well !
But yours—(your pardon)—is unlearned praise :
To the motive, the endeavour, the heart's self,
Your quick sense looks ; you crown and call aright
The soul of the purpose, ere 'tis shaped as act,
Takes flesh i' the world, and clothes itself a king ;
But when the act comes, stands for what 'tis worth,
—Here's Puccio, the skilled soldier ; he's my judge !
Was all well, Puccio ?

Puc.

All was . . . must be well :

If we beat Lucca presently, as doubtless . . .

—No, there's no doubt, we must—All was well done.

Lur. In truth? But you are of the trade, my Puccio!

You have the fellow-craftsman's sympathy!

There's none knows like a fellow of the craft,

The all unestimated sum of pains

That go to a success the world can see;

They praise them, but the best they never know:

—But you know!—Oh, if envy mix with it,

Hate even, still the bottom praise of all,

Whatever be the dregs, that drop's pure gold!

—For nothing's like it; nothing else records

Those daily, nightly drippings in the dark

Of the heart's blood, the world lets drop away

For ever . . . So, pure gold that praise must be!

And I have yours, my soldier: yet the best

Is still to come—there's one looks on apart

Whom all refers to, failure or success;

What's done might be our best, our utmost work,

And yet inadequate to serve his need:

Here's Braccio now, for Florence—here's our service—

Well done for us, is it well done for him?

His chosen engine, tasked to its full strength

Answers his end?—Should he have chosen higher?

Do we help Florence, now our best is done?

Brac. This battle with the foregone services,
Saves Florence.

Lur. Why, then, all is very well!

Here am I in the middle of my friends,

Who know me and who love me, one and all!

And yet . . . 'tis like . . . this instant while I speak

Is like the turning moment of a dream

When . . . Ah, you are not foreigners like me!

Well, then, one always dreams of friends at home,

And always come, I say, the turning point

When some thing changes in the friendly eyes

That love and look on you . . . so slight, so slight . . .

And yet it tells you they are dead and gone,

Or changed and enemies, for all their words,

And all is mockery, and a maddening show!

You, now, so kind here, all you Florentines,

What is it in your eyes . . . those lips, those brows . . .

Nobody spoke it . . . yet I know it well!—

Come, now—this battle saves you, all's at end,

Your use of me is o'er, for good, for evil,—

Come, now, what's done against me, while I speak,

In Florence? Come! I feel it in my blood,

My eyes, my hair, a voice is in my ear

That spite of all this smiling and kind speech
 You are betraying me ! What is it you do ?
 Have it your way, and think my use is over ;
 That you are saved and may throw off the mask—
 Have it my way, and think more work remains
 Which I could do,—so show you fear me not !
 Or prudent be, or generous, as you choose,
 But tell me—tell what I refused to know
 At noon, lest heart should fail me ! Well ? That letter ?
 My fate is known at Florence ! What is it ?

Brac. Sir, I shall not conceal what you divine :
 It is no novelty for innocence
 To be suspected, but a privilege :
 The after certain compensation comes.
 Charges, I say not whether false or true,
 Have been preferred against you sometime since,
 Which Florence was bound, plainly, to receive,
 And which are therefore undergoing now
 The due investigation. That is all.
 I doubt not but your innocence will shine
 Apparent and illustrious, as to me,
 To them this evening, when the Trial ends.

Lur. My Trial ?

Dom. Florence, Florence to the end,
 My whole heart thanks thee !

Puc. [to BRAC.] What is "Trial," sir ?
 It was not for a Trial—surely, no—
 I furnished you those notes from time to time ?
 I hold myself aggrieved—I am a man—
 And I might speak,—ay, and speak mere truth, too,
 And yet not mean at bottom of my heart
 What should assist a—Trial, do you say ?
 You should have told me !

Dom. Nay, go on, go on !
 His sentence ! Do they sentence him ? What is it ?
 The block ? Wheel ?

Brac. Sentence there is none as yet,
 Nor shall I give my own opinion here
 Of what it should be, or is like to be,
 When it is past, applaud or disapprove !
 Up to that point, what is there to impugn ?

Lur. They are right, then, to try me ?

Brac. I assert,
 Maintain, and justify the absolute right
 Of Florence to do all she can have done
 In this procedure,—standing on her guard,
 Receiving even services like yours
 With utmost fit suspicious wariness.

In other matters—keep the mummery up !
 Take all the experiences of the whole world,
 Each knowledge that broke thro' a heart to life,
 Each reasoning which, to work out, cost a brain,
 —In other cases, know these, warrant these,
 And then dispense with them—'tis very well !
 Let friend trust friend, and love demand its like,
 And gratitude be claimed for benefits,—
 There's grace in that—and when the fresh heart breaks,
 The new brain proves a martyr, what of it ?
 Where is the matter of one moth the more
 Singed in the candle, at a summer's end ?
 But Florence is no simple John or James
 To have his toy, his fancy, his conceit,
 That he's the one excepted man by fate,
 And, when fate shows him he's mistaken there,
 Die with all good men's praise, and yield his place
 To Paul and George intent to try their chance :
 Florence exists because these pass away
 She's a contrivance to supply a type
 Of Man, which men's deficiencies refuse
 She binds so many, that she grows out of them—
 Stands steady o'er their numbers, tho' they change
 And pass away—there's always what upholds,
 Always enough to fashion the great show !
 As, see, yon hanging city, in the sun,
 Of shapely cloud substantially the same !
 A thousand vapours rise and sink again,
 Are interfused, and live their life and die,—
 Yet ever hangs the steady show i' the air
 Under the sun's straight influence : that is well !
 That is worth Heaven to hold, and God to bless !
 And so is Florence,—the unseen sun above,
 Which draws and holds suspended all of us—
 Binds transient mists and vapours into one,
 Differing from each and better than they all.
 And shall she dare to stake this permanence
 On any one man's faith ? Man's heart is weak,
 And its temptations many : let her prove
 Each servant to the very uttermost
 Before she grant him her reward, I say !

Dom. And as for hearts she chances to mistake,
 That are not destined to receive reward,
 Tho' they deserve it, did she only know !
 —What should she do for these ?

Brac. What does she not ?
 Say, that she gives them but herself to serve !
 Herc's Luria—what had profited his strength,

When half an hour of sober fancying
 Had shown him step by step the uselessness
 Of strength exerted for its proper sake ?
 But the truth is, she did create that strength,
 Drew to the end the corresponding means.
 The world is wide—are we the only men ?
 Oh, for the time, the social purpose' sake,
 Use words agreed on, bandy epithets,
 Call any man sole Great and Wise and Good !
 But shall we, therefore, standing by ourselves,
 Insult our souls and God with the same speech ?
 There, swarm the ignoble thousands under Him—
 What marks us from the hundreds and the tens ?
 Florence took up, turned all one way the soul
 Of Luria with its fires, and here he stands !
 She takes me out of all the world as him,
 Fixing my coldness till like ice it stays
 The fire ! So, Braccio, Luria, which is best ?

Lur. Ah, brave me ? And is this indeed the way
 To gain your good word and sincere esteem ?
 Am I the baited tiger that must turn
 And fight his baiters to deserve their praise ?
 Obedience has no fruit, then ?—Be it so !
 Do you indeed remember I stand here
 The Captain of the conquering army,—mine—
 With all your tokens, praise and promise, ready
 To show for what their names were when you gave,
 Not what you style them now you take away ?
 If I call in my troops to arbitrate,
 And in their first enthusiastic thrill
 Of victory, tell them how you menace me—
 Commanding to their plain instinctive sense
 My story first, your comment afterward,—
 Will they take, think you, part with you or me ?
 When I say simply, I, the man they know,
 Ending my work, ask payment, and find Florence
 Has all this while provided silently
 Against the day of pay and proving words, •
 By what you call my sentence that's to come—
 Will they sit waiting it complacently ?
 When I resist that sentence at their head
 What will you do, my mild antagonist ?

Brac. I will rise up like fire, proud and triumphant
 That Florence knew you thoroughly and by me,
 And so was saved : “ See, Italy,” I ’ll say,
 “ The need of our precautions—here’s a man
 “ Was far advanced, just touched on the reward
 “ Less subtle cities had accoided him.—

" But we were wiser ; at the end comes this ! " —
 And from that minute all your strength will go—
 The very stones of Florence cry against
 The all-exacting, unenduring Luria,
 Resenting her first slight probation thus,
 As if he, only, shone and cast no shade,
 He, only, walked the earth with privilege
 Against suspicion, free from causing fear—
 So, for the first inquisitive mother's-word,
 He turned, and stood on his defence, forsooth !
 Reward ? You will not be worth punishment !

Lur. And Florence knew me thus ! Thus I have lived,—
 And thus you, with the clear, fine intellect,
 Braccio, the cold, acute instructed mind,
 Out of the stir, so calm and unconfused,
 Reported me—how could you otherwise ?
 Ay !—and what dropped from *you*, just now, moreover ?
 Your information, Fuccio ?—Did your skill
 And understanding sympathy approve
 Such a report of me ? Was this the end ?
 Or is even this the end ? Can I stop here—
 You, Lady, with the woman's stand apart,
 The heart to see with, not those learned eyes,
 . . . I cannot fathom why you should destroy
 The unoffending man, you call your friend—
 So, looking at the good examples here
 Of friendship, 'tis but natural I ask
 Had you a further end, in all you spoke,
 Than profit to me, in those instances
 Of perfidy from Florence to her chiefs—
 All I remember now for the first time ?

Dom. I am a daughter of the Traversari,
 Sister of Porzio and of Berto both.
 I have foreseen all that has come to pass.
 I knew the Florence that could doubt their faith
 Must needs mistrust a stranger's—holding back
 Reward from them, must hold back his reward.
 And I believed the shame they bore and died
 He would not bear, but live and fight against—
 Seeing he was of other stuff than they.

Lur. Hear them ! All these against one Foreigner !
 And all this while, where is in the whole world
 To his good faith a single witness ?

Tiburzio [who has entered during the preceding dialogue.]
 Here !

Thus I bear witness to it, not in word
 But deed. I live for Pisa ; she's not lost
 By many chances—much prevents from that !

Her army has been beaten, I am here,
 But Lucca comes at last, one chance exists.
 I rather had see Pisa three times lost
 Than saved by any traitor, even by you.
 The example of a traitor's happy fortune
 Would bring more evil in the end than good.
 Pisa rejects such : save yourself and her !
 I, in her name, resign forthwith to you
 My charge,—the highest of her offices.
 You shall not, by my counsel, turn on Florence
 Her army, give her calumny that ground—
 Nor bring it with you : be you all we gain,
 And all she 'll lose, a head to deck some bridge,
 And save the crown's cost that should deck the head.
 Leave her to perish in her perfidy,
 Plague-stricken and stripped naked to all eyes,
 A proverb and a bye-word in all mouths !
 Go you to Pisa—Florence is my place—
 Leave me to tell her of the rectitude,
 I, from the first, told Pisa, knowing it.
 To Pisa !

Dom. Ah, my Braccio, are you caught ?
Brac. Puccio, good soldier and selected man,
 Whom I have ever kept beneath my eye,
 Ready, as fit, to serve in this event
 Florence, who clear foretold it from the first—
 Thro' me, she gives you the command and charge
 She takes, thro' me, from him who held it late !
 A painful trial, very sore, was yours :
 All that could draw out, marshal in array
 The selfish passions 'gainst the public good—
 Slights, scorns, neglects, were heaped on you to bear :
 And ever you did bear and bow the head !
 It had been sorry trial, to precede
 Your feet, hold up the promise of reward
 For luring gleam ; your footsteps kept the track
 Thro' dark and doubt : take all the light at once !
 Trial is over, consummation shines ;
 Well have you served, as well henceforth command !

Puc. No, no . . . I dare not . . . I am grateful, glad ;
 But Luria —you shall understand he 's wronged—
 And he 's my Captain—this is not the way
 We soldiers climb to fortune : think again !
 The sentence is not even passed, beside !
 I dare not . . . where 's the soldier could ?

Lur. Now, Florence—
 Is it to be ?—You will know all the strength
 Of the savage—to your neck the proof must go ?

You will prove the brute nature ? Ah, I see !
 The savage plainly is impassible —
 He keeps his calm way thro' insulting words,
 Sarcastic looks, sharp gestures—one of which
 Would stop you, fatal to your finer sense :
 But if he steadily advances, still
 Without a mark upon his callous hide,
 Thro' the mere brushwood you grow angry with,
 And leave the tatters of your flesh upon,
 —You have to learn that when the true bar comes,
 The thick mid forest, the real obstacle,
 Which when you reach, you give the labour up,
 Nor dash on, but lie down composed before,
 —He goes against it, like the brute he is !
 It falls before him, or he dies in his course !
 I kept my course thro' past ingratitude—
 I saw—it does seem, now, as if I saw,
 Could not but see, those insults as they fell,
 —Ay, let them glance from off me, very like,
 Laughing, perhaps, to think the quality
 You grew so bold on, while you so despised
 The Moor's dull mute inapprehensive mood,
 Was saving you ; I bore and kept my course :
 Now real wrong fronts me—see if I succumb !
 Florence withstands me ?—I will punish her !
 At night my sentence will arrive, you say !
 Till then I cannot, if I would, rebel—
 —Unauthorised to lay my office down,
 Retaining my full power to will and do :
 After—it is to see. Tiburzio, thanks !
 Go—you are free—join Lucca. I suspend
 All further operations till to-night.
 Thank you, and for the silence most of all !
 [To Brac.] Let my complacent bland accuser go,
 And carry his self-approving head and heart
 Safe thro' the army which would trample him
 Dead in a moment at my word or sign !
 Go, Sir, to Florence ; tell friends what I say—
 That while I wait their sentence, theirs waits them !
 [To Dom.] You, Lady,—you have black Italian eyes :
 I would be generous if I might . . Oh, yes—
 For I remember how so oft you seemed
 Inclined at heart to break the barrier down
 Which Florence makes God build between us both.
 Alas, for generosity ! this hour
 Demands strict justice—bear it as you may !
 I must—the Moor,—the Savage,—pardon you !
 [To Puc.] Puccio, my trusty soldier, see them forth !—

ACT IV.

EVENING.

Enter PUCCIO and JACOPO.

Puc. What Luria *will* do ? Ah, 'tis yours, fair Sir,
 Your and your subtle-witted master's part,
 To tell me that ; I tell you what he can.

Jac. Friend, you mistake my station ! I observe
 The game, watch how my betters play, no more.

Puc. But mankind are not pieces—there 's your fault !
 You cannot push them, and, the first move made,
 Lean back to study what the next should be,
 In confidence that, when 'tis fixed upon,
 You 'll find just where you left them, blacks and whites :
 Men go on moving when your hand 's away.
 You build, I notice, firm on Luria's faith
 This whole time,—firmer than I choose to build,
 Who never doubted it—of old, that is—
 With Luria in his ordinary mind :
 But now, oppression makes the wise man mad—
 How do I know he will not turn and stand
 And hold his own against you, as he may ?
 Suppose that he withdraws to Pisa—well,—
 Then, even if all happens to your wish,
 Which is a chance . . .

Jac. Nay—'twas an oversight,
 Not waiting till the proper warrant came :
 You could not take what was not ours to give.
 But when at night the sentence really comes,
 And Florence authorizes past dispute
 Luria's removal and your own advance,
 You will perceive your duty and accept ?

Puc. Accept what ? muster-rolls of soldiers' names ?
 An army upon paper ?—I want men,
 Their hearts as well as hands—and where 's a heart
 That 's not with Luria, in the multitude
 I come from walking thro' by Luria's side ?
 You gave him to them, set him on to grow,
 Head-like, upon their trunk, one blood feeds both,
 They feel him there, and live, and well know why !
 —For they do know, if you are ignorant,
 Who kept his own place and respected theirs,
 Managed their ease, yet never spared his own.

All was your deed : another might have served—
 There's peradventure no such dearth of men—
 But you chose Luria—so they grew to him :
 And now, for nothing they can understand,
 Luria's removed, off is to roll the head—
 The body's mine—much I shall do with it !

Jac. That's at the worst !

Puc. No—at the best, it is !

Best, do you hear ? I saw them by his side ;
 Only we two with Luria in the camp
 Are left that know the secret ? You think that ?
 Hear what I saw : from rear to van, no heart
 But felt the quiet patient hero there
 Was wronged, nor in the moveless ranks an eye
 But glancing told its fellow the whole story
 Of that convicted silent knot of spies
 Who passed thro' them to Florence ; they might pass—
 No breast but gladlier beat when free of them !
 Our troops will catch up Luria, close him round,
 Lead him to Florence as their natural lord,
 Partake his fortunes, live or die with him !

Jac. And by mistake catch up along with him
 Puccio, no doubt, compelled in self-despite
 To still continue Second in Command !

Puc. No, Sir, no second nor so fortunate !
 Your tricks succeed with me too well for that !
 I am as you have made me, and shall die
 A mere trained fighting hack to serve your end ;
 With words, you laugh at while they leave your mouth,
 For my life's rules and ordinance of God !
 I have to do my duty, keep my faith,
 And earn my praise, and guard against my blame.
 As I was trained. I shall accept your charge,
 And fight against one better than myself,
 And my own heart's conviction of his worth—
 That, you may count on just !—as hitherto
 I have gone on, persuaded I was wronged,
 Slighted, and all the terms we learn by rote,—
 All because Luria superseded me—
 Because the better nature, fresh-inspired,
 Mounted above me to its proper place !
 What mattered all the kindly graciousness,
 And cordial brother's bearing ? This was clear—
 I, once the captain, was subaltern now,
 And so must keep complaining like a fool !
 Go, take the curse of a lost man, I say !
 You neither play your puppets to the end,
 Nor treat the real man,—for his readiness' sake

Thrust rudely in their place,—with such regard
As might console them for their altered rank.
Me, the mere steady soldier, you depose
For Luria, and here's all that he deserves !
Of what account, then, are my services ?
One word for all : whatever Luria does,
—If backed by his indignant troops he turns
In self-defence and Florence goes to ground,—
Or for a signal, everlasting shame,
He pardons you, and simply seeks his friends
And heads the Pisan and the Lucchese troops
—And if I, for you ingrates past belief,
Resolve to fight against a man called false,
Who, inasmuch as he is true, fights there—
Whichever way he wins, he wins for me,
For every soldier, for the common good !
Sir, chronicling the rest, omit not this !

As they go, enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Hus. Saw'st thou ?—For they are gone ! The world lies
bare

Before thee, to be tasted, felt and seen
Like what it is, now Florence goes away !
Thou livest now, with men art man again !
Those Florentines were eyes to thee of old ;
But Braccio, but Domizia, gone is each—
There lie beneath thee thine own multitudes —
Sawest thou ?

Lur. *I saw.*

Hus. Then, hold thy course, my King !
The years return. Let thy heart have its way !
Ah, they would play with thee as with all else ?
Turn thee to use, and fashion thee anew,
Find out God's fault in thee as in the rest ?
Oh, watch but, listen only to these men
Once at their occupation ! Ere ye know,
The free great heaven is shut, their stifling pall
Drops till it frets the very tingling hair—
So weighs it on our head,—and, for the earth,
Our common earth is tethered up and down,
Over and across—here shalt thou move, they say !

Lur. Ay, Husain ?

Hus. So have they spoiled all beside !
So stands a man girt round with Florentines,
Priests, greybeards, Braccios, women, boys and spics,
All in one tale, each singing the same song,
Take pledge and give it, go their every way,
How thou must house, and live at bed and board,

Breathe to their measure, make thy blood beat time
 With theirs—or—all is nothing—thou art lost—
 A savage . . how shouldst thou perceive as they ?
 Feel glad to stand 'neath God's close naked hand !
 Look up to it ! Why, down they pull thy neck,
 Lest it crush thee, who feel'st it and wouldst kiss,
 Without their priests that needs must glove it first,
 Lest peradventure it should wound thy lip !
 Love Woman ! Why, a very beast thou art !
 Thou must . . .

Lur. Peace, Husain !

Hus. Ay, but, spoiling all,
 For all, else true, things substituting false,
 That they should dare spoil, of all instincts, thine !
 Should dare to take thee with thine instincts up,
 Thy battle-ardours, like a ball of fire,
 And class them and allow them place and play
 So far, no farther—unabashed the while !
 Thou with the soul that never can take rest—
 Thou born to do, undo, and do again,
 But never to be still,—wouldst thou make war ?
 Oh, that is commendable, just and right !
 Come over, say they, have the honour due
 In living out thy nature ! Fight thy best—
 It is to be for Florence not thyself !
 For thee, it were a horror and a plague—
 For us, when war is made for Florence, see,
 How all is changed—the fire that fed on earth
 Now towers to heaven !—

Lur. And what sealed up so long
 My Husain's mouth ?

Hus. Oh, friend, oh, lord—for me.
 What am I ?—I was silent at thy side,
 That am a part of thee—It is thy hand,
 Thy foot that glows when in the heart fresh blood
 Boils up, thou heart of me ! Now live again !
 Again love as thou likest, hate as free !
 Turn to no Braccios nor Domizias now,
 To ask, before thy very limbs dare move,
 If Florence' welfare be concerned thereby !

Lur. So clear what Florence must expect of me ?
Hus. Both armies against Florence ! Take revenge !
 Wide, deep—to live upon—in feeling now,—
 And after, in remembrance, year by year—
 And, with the dear conviction, die at last !
 She lies now at thy pleasure—pleasure have !
 Their vaunted intellect that gilds our sense,
 And blends with life to show it better by,

—How think'st thou? —I have turned that light on them! They called our thirst of war a transient thing; The battle-element must pass away From life, they said, and leave a tranquil world: —Master, I took their light and turned it full On that dull turgid vein they said would burst And pass away; and as I looked on Life, Still everywhero I tracked this, though it hid And shifted, lay so silent as it thought, Changed oft the hue yet ever was the same: Why, 'twas all fighting, all their nobler life! All work was fighting, every harm—defeat, And every joy obtained—a victory! Be not their dupe!

—Their dupe? That hour is past!

Here stand'st thou in the glory and the calm!

All is determined! Silence for me now! [HUSAIN goes.

Lur. Have I heard all?

Doni. [advancing from the background.] No, Luria, I am here!

Not from the motives these have urged on thee, Ignoble, insufficient, incomplete, And pregnant each with sure seeds of decay, As failing of sustainment from thyself, —Neither from low revenge, nor selfishness. Nor savage lust of power, nor one, nor all, Shalt thou abolish Florence! I proclaim The angel in thee, and reject the spirits Which ineffectual crowd about his strength, And mingle with his work and claim a share —Inconsciously to the augustest end Thou hast arisen: second not in rank So much as time, to him who first ordained That Florence, thou art to destroy, should be— Yet him a star, too, guided, who broke first The pride of lonely power, the life apart, And made the eminences, each to each, Lean o'er the level world and let it lie Safe from the thunder henceforth 'neath their arms— So the few famous men of old combined, And let the multitude rise underneath, And reach them, and unite—so Florence grew! Braccio speaks well, it was well worth the price. But when the sheltered Many grew in pride And grudged the station of the glorious ones, Who, greater than their kind, are truly great Only in voluntary servitude— Time was for thee to rise, and thou art here.

Such plague possessed this Florence—who can tell
 The mighty girth and greatness at the heart
 Of those so noble pillars of the grove
 She pulled down in her envy ? Who as I,
 The light weak parasite born but to twine
 Round each of them and, measuring them, so live ?
 My light love keeps the matchless circle safe,
 My slender life proves what has passed away !
 I lived when they departed ; lived to cling
 To thee, the mighty stranger ; thou wouldest riso
 And burst the thralldom, and avenge, I knew.
 I have done nothing ; all was thy strong heart :
 But a bird's weight can break the infant tree
 Which after holds an acry in its arms,
 And 'twas my care that nought should warp thy spire
 From rising to the height ; the roof is reached—
 Break through and there is all the sky a' ove !
 Go on to Florence, Luria ! 'Tis man's cause !
 Fail thou, and thine own fall is least to dread !
 Thou keepest Florence in her evil way,
 Encouragest her sin so much the more—
 And while the bloody past is justified,
 Thou all the surcler dost work against
 The men to come, the Lurias yet unborn,
 Who, greater than thyself, are reached o'er thee
 That giv'st the vantage-ground their foes require,
 As o'er my prostrate House thyself was't reached !
 Man calls thee—God shall judge thee : all is said,
 The mission of my House fulfilled at last !
 And the mere woman, speaking for herself,
 Reserves speech ; it is now no woman's time. [DOMIZIA goes.]

Lur. So at the last must figure Luria, then !
 Doing the various work of all his friends,
 And answering every purpose save his own.
 No doubt, 'tis well for them to wish ; for him —
 After the exploit what is left ? Perchance
 A little pride upon the swarthy brow,
 At having brought successfully to bear
 'Gainst Florence' self her own especial arms,—
 Her craftiness, impelled by fiercer strength
 From Moorish blood than feeds the northern wit—
 But after !—once the easy vengeance willed,
 Beautiful Florence at a word laid low
 —(Not in her Domes and Towers and Palaces,
 Not even in a dream, that outrage !)—low,
 As shamed in her own eyes henceforth for ever,
 Low, for the rival cities round to see,
 Conquered and pardoned by a hireling Moor !

—For him, who did the irreparable wrong,
What would be left, his life's illusion fled,—
What hope or trust in the forlorn wide world ?
How strange that Florence should mistake me so !
How grew this ? What withdrew her faith from me ?
Some cause ! These fretful-blooded children talk
Against their mother,—they are wronged, they say—
Notable wrongs a smile makes up again !
So, taking fire at each supposed offence,
They may speak rashly, suffer for rash speech—
But what could it have been in word or deed
That injured me ? Some one word spoken more
Out of my heart, and all had changed perhaps !
My fault, it must have been,—for what gain they ?
Why risk the danger ? See, what I could do !
And my fault, wherefore visit upon them,
My Florentines ? The generous revenge,
I meditate ! To stay here passively,
Go at their summons, be as they dispose—
Why, if my very soldiers keep their ranks,
And if I pacify my chiefs, what then ?
I ruin Florence—teach her friends mistrust—
Confirm her enemies in harsh belief—
And when she finds one day, as she must find,
The strange mistake, and how my heart was hers,
Shall it console me, that my Florentines
Walk with a sadder step, a graver face,
Who took me with such frankness, praised me so,
At the glad outset ! Had they loved me less,
They had less feared what seemed a change in me.
And after all, who did the harm ? Not they !
How could they interpose with those old fools
In the council ? Suffer for those old fools' sakes—
They, who made pictures of me, sang the songs
About my battles ? Ah, we Moors get blind
Out of our proper world where we can see !
The sun that guides is closer to us ! There—
There, my own orb ! He sinks from out the sky !
Why, there ! a whole day has he blessed the land,
My land, our Florence all about the hills,
The fields and gardens, vineyards, olive-grounds,
All have been blest—and yet we Florentines
With minds intent upon our battle here,
Found that he rose too soon, or else too late,
Gave us no vantage, or gave Pisa more—
And so we wrunged him ! Does he turn in ire
To burn the earth, that cannot understand ?
Or drop out quietly, and leave the sky,

His task once ended ? Night wipes blame away :
 Another morning from my East shall rise
 And find all eyes at leisure, more disposed
 To watch it and approve its work, no doubt.
 So, praise the new sun, the successor praise !
 Praise the new Luria, and forget the old !

[*Taking a phial from his breast.*

—Strange ! This is all I brought from my own Land
 To help me—Europe would supply the rest,
 All needs beside, all other helps save this !
 I thought of adverse fortune, battles lost,
 The natural upbraidings of the loser,
 And then this quiet remedy to seek
 At end of the disastrous day—

[*He drinks.*

'Tis sought !

This was my happy triumph-morning : Florence
 Is saved : I drink this ere night,—die !—Strange !

ACT V.

NIGHT.

LURIA. PUCCIO.

Lur. I thought to do this, not to talk this : well !
 Such were my projects for the City's good,
 To save her from attack or by defence.
 Time, here as elsewhere, soon or late may take
 Our foresight by surprise with chance and change ;
 But not a little we provide against
 —If you see clear on every point.

Puc. Most clear.

Lur. Then all is said—not much, if you count words
 Yet for an understanding ear enough,
 And all that my brief stay permits, beside.
 Nor must you blame me, as I sought to teach
 My elder in command, or threw a doubt
 Upon the very skill, it comforts me
 To know I leave,—your steady soldiership
 That never failed me : yet, because it seemed
 A stranger's eye might haply note defect,
 Which skill, thro' use and custom, overlooks,
 I have gone into the old cares once more,
 As if I had to come and save again

Florence—that May—that morning ! 'Tis night now—
Well—I broke off with ? . . .

Puc. Of the past campaign
You spoke—of measures to be kept in mind
For future use.

Lur. True, so . . . but, time—no time !
As well end here : remember this, and me !
Farewell now !

Puc. Dare I speak ?

Lur. —The south o' the river—
How is the second stream called . . . no,—the third ?

Puc. Pesa.
Lur. And a stone's cast from the fording place,
To the East,—the little mount's name ?

Puc. Lupo.

Lur. Ay !
Ay—there the tower, and all that side is safe !
With San Romano, west of Evola,
San Miniato, Scala, Empoli,
Five towers in all,—forget not !

Puc. Fear not me !

Lur. —Nor to memorialize the Council now,
I' the easy hour, on those battalions' claim
On the other side, by Staggia on the hills,
That kept the Siennese at check !

Puc. One word—
Sir, I must speak ! That you submit yourself
To Florence' bidding, howso'er it prove,
And give up the command to me—is much,
Too much, perhaps : but what you tell me now,
Even will affect the other course you choose—
Poor as it may be, peril even that !
Refuge you seek at Pisa—yet these plans
All militate for Forence, all conclude
Your formidable work to make her queen
Of the country,—which her rivals rose against
When you began it,—which to interrupt,
Pisa would buy you off at any price !
You cannot mean to sue for Pisa's help,
With this made perfect and on record ?

Lur. I—
At Pisa, and for refuge, do you say ?

Puc. Where are you going, then ? You must decide
On leaving us, a silent fugitive,
Alone, at night—you, stealing thro' our lines,
Who were this morning's Luria,—you escape
To painfully begin the world once more,
With such a Past, as it had never been !

Where are you going ?

Lur. Not so far, my Puccio,
But that I hope to hear, and know, and praise
(If you mind praise from your old Captain yet)
Each happy blow you strike for Florence !

Puc. —Ay,
But ere you gain your shelter, what may come ?
For see—tho' nothing 's surely known as yet,
Still . . . truth must out . . . I apprehend the worst.
If mere suspicion stood for certainty
Before, there 's nothing can arrest the steps
Of Florence toward your ruin, once on foot.
Forgive her fifty times, it matters not !
And having disbelieved your innocence,
How can she trust your magnanimity ?
You may do harm to her—why, then, you will !
And Florence is sagacious in pursuit.
Have you a friend to count on ?

Lur. One sure friend.

Puc. Potent ?

Lur. All potent.
Puc. And he is apprised ?

Lur. He waits me.

Puc. So !—Then I, put in your place,
Making my profit of all done by you,
Calling your labours mine, reaping their fruit,
To these, the State's gift, now add this of yours—
That I may take to my peculiar store
All your instructions to do Florence good ;
And if, by putting some few happily
In practice, I should both advantage her
And draw down honour on myself,—what then ?

Lur. Do it, my Puccio ! I shall know and praise !

Puc. Though, so men say, “ mark what we gain by change
“ —A Puccio for a Luria !”

Lur. Even so !

Puc. Then, not for fifty hundred Florences,
Would I accept one office save my own,
Fill any other than my rightful post
Here at your feet, my Captain and my Lord !
That such a cloud should break, such trouble be,
Ere a man settle soul and body down
Into his true place and take rest for ever !
Here were my wise eyes fixed on your right hand,
And so the bad thoughts came and the worse words,
And all went wrong and painfully enough,—
No wonder,—till, the right spot stumbled on,
All the jar stops, and there is peace at once !

I am yours now,—a tool your right hand wields !
 God's love, that I should live, the man I am,
 On orders, warrants, patents and the like,
 As if there were no glowing eye i' the world,
 To glance straight inspiration to my brain,
 No glorious heart to give mine twice the beats !
 For, see—my doubt, where is it ?—Fear ? 'tis flown !
 And Florence and her anger are a tale
 To scare a child ! Why, half a dozen words
 Will tell her, spoken as I now can speak,
 Her error, my past folly—and all 's right,
 And you are Luria, our great chief again !
 Or at the worst—which worst were best of all—
 To exile or to death I follow you !

Lur. Thanks, Puccio ! Let me use the privilege
 You grant me : if I still command you, — stay !
 Remain here —my vicegerent, it shall be,
 And not successor : let me, as of old,
 Still serve the State, my spirit prompting yours ;
 Still triumph, one for both—There ! Leave me now !
 You cannot disobey my first command ?
 Remember what I spoke of Jacopo,
 And what you promised to observe with him !
 Send him to speak with me—nay, no farewell —
 You shall be by me when the sentence comes. [Puccio goes.
 So, there 's one Florentine returns again !
 Out of the genial morning company,
 One face is left to take into the night.

Enter JACOPO.

Jac. I wait for your commands, Sir.

Lur.

What, so soon ?

I thank your ready presence and fair word.
 I used to notice you in early days
 As of the other species, so to speak,
 Those watchers of the lives of us who act—
 That weigh our motives, scrutinize our thoughts ;
 So, I propound this to your faculty
 As you would tell me, were a town to take
 . . . That is, of old. I am departing hence
 Under these imputations : that is nought—
 I leave no friend on whom they may rebound,
 Hardly a name behind me in the land,
 Being a stranger ; all the more behoves
 That I regard how altered were the case
 With natives of the country, Florentines,
 On whom the like mischance should fall ; the roots
 O' the tree survive the ruin of the trunk—

No root of mine will throb—you understand.
 But I had predecessors, Florentines,
 Accused as I am now, and punished so—
 The Traversari—you know more than I
 How stigmatized they are, and lost in shame.
 Now, Puccio, who succeeds me in command,
 Both served them and succeeded, in due time
 He knows the way, holds proper documents,
 And has the power to lay the simple truth
 Before an active spirit, as I know yours :
 And also there 's Tiburzio, my new friend,
 Will, at a word, confirm such evidence,
 He being the chivalric soul we know.
 I put it to your instinct—were 't not well,
 —A grace, though but for contrast's sake, no more,—
 If you who witness, and have borne a share
 Involuntarily, in my mischance,
 Should, of your proper motion, set your skill
 To indicate . . . that is, investigate
 The reason or the wrong of what befell
 Those famous citizens, your countrymen
 Nay—you shall promise nothing—but reflect,
 And if your sense of justice prompt you—good !

Jac. And if, the trial past, their fame stand clear
 To all men's eyes, as yours, my lord, to mine—
 Their ghosts may sleep in quiet satisfied !
 For me, a straw thrown up into the air,
 My testimony goes for a straw's worth.
 I used to hold by the instructed brain,
 And move with Braccio as the master-wind ;
 The heart leads surlier : I must move with you—
 As greatest now, who ever were the best.
 So, let the last and humblest of your servants
 Accept your charge, as Braccio's heretofore,
 And offer homage, by obeying you !

[JACOPO goes.]

Lur. Another!—Luria goes not poorly forth !
 If we could wait ! The only fault 's with Time :
 All men become good creatures—but so slow !

Enter DOMIZIA.

Lur. Ah, you once more ?

Dom. Domizia, that you knew,
 Performed her task, and died with it—"Tis I !
 Another woman, you have never known.
 Let the Past sleep now.

Lur. I have done with it.

Dom. How inexhaustibly the spirit grows !
 One object, she seemed erewhile born to reach

With her whole energies and die content,
 So like a wall at the world's end it stood,
 With nought beyond to live for,—is it reached ?
 Already are new undreamed energies
 Outgrowing under, and extending further
 To a new object ;—there 's another world !
 See ! I have told the purpose of my life,—
 'Tis gained—you are decided, well or ill—
 You march on Florence, or submit to her—
 My work is done with you, your brow declares :
 But—leave you ? More of you seems yet to reach
 I stay for what I just begin to see.

Lur. So that you turn not to the Past !

Dom. You trace

Nothing but ill in it—my selfish impulse,
 Which sought its ends and disregarded yours ?

Lur. Speak not against your nature : best, each keep
 His own—you, yours—most, now, when I keep mine,
 —At least, fall by it, having too weakly stood.
 God's finger marks distinctions, all so fine,
 'We would confound—the Lesser has its use,
 Which, when it apes the Greater, is foregone.
 I, born a Moor, lived half a Florentine ;
 But, punished properly, can die a Moor.
 Beside, there is what makes me understand
 Your nature . . I have seen it —

Dom. One like mine ?

Lur. In my own East . . if you would stoop and help
 My barbarous illustration . . it sounds ill—
 Yet there 's no wrong at bottom—rather, praise—

Dom. Well ?

Lur. We have creatures there which, if you saw
 The first time, you would doubtless marvel at,
 For their surpassing beauty, craft and strength.
 And tho' it were a lively moment's shock
 Wherein you found the purpose of those tongues
 That seemed innocuous in their lambent play,
 Yet, once made known such grace required such guard,
 Your reason soon would acquiesce, I think,
 In the Wisdom which made all things for the best ;
 So take them, good with ill, contentedly—
 The prominent beauty with the secret sting.
 I am glad to have seen you wondrous Florentines,
 Yet . .

Dom. I am here to listen.

Lur. My own East !

How nearer God we were ! He glows above
 With scarce an intervention, presses close

And palpitatingly, His soul o'er ours !
 We feel Him, nor by painful reason know !
 The everlasting minute of creation
 Is felt there ; *Now* it is, as t was Then ;
 All changes at His instantaneous will,
 Not by the operation of a law
 Whose maker is elsewhere at other work !
 His soul is still engaged upon his world—
 Man's praise can forward it, Man's prayer suspend,
 For is not God all-mighty ?—To recast
 The world, erase old things and make them new,
 What costs it Him ? So, man breathes noble there !
 And inasmuch as Feeling, the East's gift,
 Is quick and transient—comes, and lo, is gone—
 While Northern Thought is slow and durable,
 Oh, what a mission was reserved for me,
 Who, born with a perception of the power
 And use of the North's thought for us of the East,
 Should have stayed there and turned it to account,
 Giving Thought's character and permanence
 To the too-transitory Feelings there—
 Writing God's messages in mortal words !
 Instead of which, I leave my fated field
 For this where such a task is needed least,
 Where all are born consummate in the art
 I just perceive a chance of making mine,—
 And then, deserting thus my early post,
 I wonder that the men I come among
 Mistake me ! There, how all had understood,
 Still brought fresh stuff for me to stamp and keep,
 Fresh instinct to translate them into law !
 Me, who . . .

Dom. Who here the greater task achieve,
 More needful even : who have brought fresh stuff
 For us to mould, interpret and prove right,—
 New feelings fresh from God, which, could we know
 O' the instant, where had been our need of them ?
 —Whose life re-teaches us what life should be,
 What faith is, loyalty and simpleness,
 All, their revelation taught us so long since
 That, having meane tradition of the fact,
 Truth copied falteringly from copies faint,
 The early traits all dropped away,—we said
 On sight of faith of yours, “ so look not faith
 “ We understand, described and taught before.”
 But still, the truth was shown ; and tho' at first
 It suffer from our haste, yet trace by trace
 Old memories reappear, the likeness grows,

Our slow Thought does its work, and all 's re-known.
 Oh, noble Luria ! what you have decreed
 I see not, but no animal revenge,
 No brute-like punishment of bad by worse—
 It cannot be, the gross and vulgar way
 Traced for me by convention and mistake,
 Has gained that calm approving eye and brow !
 Spare Florence after all ! Let Luria trust
 To his own soul, and I will trust to him !

Lur. In time !

Dom. How, Luria ?

Lur. It is midnight now—

And they arrive from Florence with my fate.

Dom. I hear no step . . .

Lur. I feel it, as you say !

Enter HUSAIN.

Hus. The man returned from Florence

Lur. As I knew.

Hus. He seeks thee.

Lur. And I only wait for him.

Aught else ?

Hus. A movement of the Lucchese troops
 Southward—

Lur. . . . Toward Florence ? Have out instantly . . .
 Ah, old use clings ! Puccio must care henceforth !
 In—quick—'tis nearly midnight ! Bid him come !

Enter TIBURZIO, BRICCIUS, and PUCCIO.

Lur. Tiburzio ?—not at Pisa ?

Tib. I return

From Florence : I serve Pisa, and must think
 By such procedure I have served her best.

A people is but the attempt of many

To rise to the completer life of one—

And those who live as models for the mass
 Are singly of more value than they all.

Such man are you, and such a time is this

That your sole fate concerns a nation more

Than its apparent welfare ; and to prove

Your rectitude, and duly crown the same,

Imports it far beyond the day's event,

Its battle's loss or gain—the mass remains,

Keep but the model safe, new men will rise

To study it, and other days to prove

How great a good was Luria's having lived.

I might go try my fortune as you bade,

And joining Lucca, helped by your disgrace,

Repair our harm—so were to-day's work done ;
 But where were Luria for our sons to see ?
 No, I look farther. I have testified
 (Declaring my submission to your arms
 Your full success to Florence, making clear
 Your probity, as none else could : I spoke—
 And it shone clearly !

Lur. Ah—till Braccio spoke !

Brac. Till Braccio told in just a word the whole—
 His old great error, and return to knowledge—
 Which told . . . Nay, Luria, *I* should droop the head,
 I, whom shame rests with, yet I dare look up,
 Sure of your pardon now I sue for it,
 Knowing you wholly—so let midnight end !
 Sunrise will come next ! Still you answer not ?
 The shadow of the night is past away :
 Our circling faces here 'mid which it rose
 Are all that felt it,—they close round you now
 To witness its completest vanishing.
 Speak, Luria ! Here begins your true career—
 Look up to it !—All now is possible—
 The glory and the grandeur of each dream—
 And every prophecy shall be fulfilled
 Save one . . . (nay, now your word must come at last)
 —That you would punish Florence !

Hus. (*pointing to Luria's dead body.*) That is done !—

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY.

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY.

PART FIRST, BEING WHAT WAS CALLED THE
POETRY OF CHIAPPINO'S LIFE: AND PART SECOND
ITS PROSE.

PART I.

Inside LUITOLFO's house at Faenza. CHIAPPINO, EULALIA.

Eu. What is it keeps Luitolfo? Night's fast falling,
And 'twas scarce sunset . . . had the Ave-bell
Sounded before he sought the Provost's House?
I think not: all he had to say would take
Few minutes, such a very few, to say!
How do you think, Chiappino? If our lord
The Provost were less friendly to your friend
Than everybody here professes him,
I should begin to tremble—should not you?
Why are you silent when so many times
I turn and speak to you?

Ch. That's good!

Eu. You laugh:

Ch. Yes. I had fancied nothing that bears price
In the whole world was left to call my own,
And, may be, felt a little pride therat:
Up to a single man's or woman's love,
Down to the right in my own flesh and blood,
There's nothing mine, I fancied,—till you spoke!
—Counting, you see, as "nothing" the permission
To study this peculiar lot of mine
In silence: well, go silence with the rest
Of the world's good! What can I say, shall serve?

Eu. This,—lest you, even more than needs, embitter
Our parting: say your wrongs have cast, for once,
A cloud across your spirit!

Ch. How a cloud?

Eu. No man nor woman loves you, did you say?

Ch. My God, were 't not for thee!

Eu. Ay, God remains,
Even did Men forsake you.

Ch. Oh, not so!

Were 't not for God, I mean, what hope of truth—
Speaking truth, hearing truth, would stay with Man?
I, now—the houndless, friendless, penniless,
Proscribed and exiled wretch who speaks to you,
Ought to speak truth, yet could not, for my death,
(The thing that tempts me most) help speaking lies
About your friendship, and Luitolfo's courage,
And all our townsfolk's equanimity,—
Through sheer incompetence to rid myself
Of the old miserable lying trick
Caught from the liars I have lived with,—God,
Did I not turn to thee! it is thy prompting
I dare to be ashamed of, and thy counsel
Would die along my coward lip, I know—
But I do turn to thee! This craven tongue,
These features which refuse the soul its way,
Reclaim Thou! Give me truth—truth, power to speak
—And after be sole present to approve
The spoken truth!—or, stay, that spoken truth,
Who knows but you, too, might approve?

Eu. Ah, well—
Keep silence, then, Chiappino!

Ch. You would hear,
And shall now,—why the thing we're pleased to style
My gratitude to you and all your friends
For service done me, is just gratitude
So much as yours was service—and no more.
I was born here, so was Luitolfo,—both
At one time, much with the same circumstance
Of rank and wealth; and both, up to this night
Of parting company, have side by side
Still fared, he in the sunshine—I, the shadow:
“Why?” asks the world: “Because,” replies the world
To its complacent self, “these playfellows,
Who took at church the holy-water drop
One from the other's finger, and so forth,—
Were of two moods: Luitolfo was the proper
Friend-making, everywhere friend-finding soul,
Fit for the sunshine, so it followed him;

A happy-tempered bringer of the best
 Out of the worst ; who bears with what 's past cure,
 And puts so good a face on 't—wisely passive
 Where action 's fruitless, while he remedies
 In silence what the foolish rail against ;
 A man to smooth such natures as parade
 Of opposition must exasperate—
 No general gauntlet-gatherer for the weak
 Against the strong, yet over-scrupulous
 At lucky junctures ; one who won't forego
 The after-battle work of binding wounds,
 Because, forsooth, he 'd have to bring himself
 To side with their inflictors for their leave ! ”
 —Why do you gaze, nor help me to repeat
 What comes so glibly from the common mouth,
 About Luitolfo and his so-styled friend ?

Eu. Because, that friend's sense is obscured . . .

Ch.

I thought

You would be readier with the other half
 Of the world's story,—my half ! —Yet, 'tis true.
 For all the world does say it ! Say your worst !
 True, I thank God, I ever said “ you sin,”
 When a man did sin : if I could not say it,
 I glared it at him,—if I could not glare it,
 I prayed against him,—then my part seemed over ;
 God's may begin yet—so it will, I trust !

Eu. If the world outraged you, did we ?

Ch.

What 's “ me ”

That you use well or ill ? It 's Man, in me,
 All your successes are an outrage to,
 You all, whom sunshine follows, as you say !
 Here 's our Faenza birthplace—they send here
 A Provost from Ravenna—how he rules,
 You can at times be eloquent about—
 “ Then, end his rule ! ” ah yes, one stroke does that !
 But patience under wrong works slow and sure :
 Must violence still bring peace forth ? He, beside,
 Returns so blandly one's obeisance—ah—
 Some latent virtue may be lingering yet,
 Some human sympathy which, once excite,
 And all the lump were leavened quietly—
 So, no more talk of striking, for this time !
 But I, as one of those he rules, won't bear
 These pretty takings-up and layings down
 Our cause, just as you think occasion suits !
 Enough of earnest, is there ? You 'll play, will you ?
 Diversify your tactics,—give submission,
 Obsequiousness and flattery a turn,

While we die in our misery patient deaths ?
 We all are outraged then, and I the first !
 I, for Mankind, resent each shrug and smirk,
 Each beck and bend, each . . . all you do and are,
 I hate !

Eu. We share a common censure, then !
 'Tis well you have not poor Luitolfo's part
 Or mine to point out in the wide offence.

Ch. Oh, shall I let you so escape me, Lady ?
 Come, on your own ground, Lady,—from yourself,
 (Leaving the people's wrong, which most is mine,)
 What have I got to be so grateful for ?
 These three last fines, no doubt, one on the other
 Paid by Luitolfo ?

Eu. Shâme, Chiappino !

Ch. Shâme

Fall presently on who deserves it most !
 Which is to see. He paid my fines—my friend,
 Your prosperous smooth husband presently,
 Then, scarce your wooer,—now, your lover : well—
 I loved you !

Eu. Hold !

Ch. You knew it, years ago ;
 When my voice faltered and my eyes grew dim
 Because you gave me your silk mask to hold—
 My voice that greatness when there's need to curse
 The people's Provost to their heart's content,
 —My eyes, the Provost, who bears all men's eyes,
 Banishes now because he cannot bear !
 You knew . . . but you do your parts—my part, I !
 So be it ! you flourish—I decay ! All 's well !

Eu. I hear this for the first time !

Ch. The fault's there ?
 Then, my days spoke not, and my nights of fire
 Were voiceless ? Then, the very heart may burst
 Yet all prove nought, because no mincing speech
 Tells leisurely that thus it is and thus ?
 Eulalia—truce with toying for this once—
 A banished fool, who troubles you to-night
 For the last time—Oh, what 's to fear from me ?
 You knew I loved you !

Eu. Not so, on my faith !
 You were my now-affianced lover's friend—
 Came in, went out with him, could speak as he ;
 All praise your ready parts and pregnant wit ;
 See how your words come from you in a crowd !
 Luitolfo 's first to place you o'er himself
 In all that challenges respect and love—

Yet you were silent then, who blame me now !
 I say all this by fascination, sure—
 I am all but wed to one I love, yet listen—
 It must be, you are wronged, and that the wrongs
 Luitolfo pities . . .

Ch. —You too pity ? Do !
 But hear first what my wrongs are ; so began
 This talk and so shall end this talk. I say,
 Was 't not enough that I must strive, I saw,
 To grow so far familiar with your charms
 As to contrive some way to win them—which
 To do, an age seemed far too little—for, see !
 We all aspire to Heaven—and there is Heaven
 Above us—go there ! Dare we go ? no, surely !
 How dare we go w/out a reverent pause,
 A growing less unfit for Heaven ?—Even so,
 I dared not speak - the greater fool, it seems !
 Was 't not enough to struggle with such folly,
 But I must have, beside, the very man
 Whose slight, free, loose and incapacious soul
 Gave his tongue scope to say whate'er he would
 —Must have him load me with his benefits
 For fortune's fiercest stroke !

Eu. Justice to him
 That's now entreating, at his risk perhaps,
 Justice for you ! Did he once call those acts
 Of simple friendship—bounties, benefits ?

Ch. No—the straight course had been to call them so—
 Then, I had flung them back, and kept myself
 Unhampered, free as he to win the prize
 We both sought—but “the gold was dross,” he said,
 “He loved me, and I loved him not—to spurn
 “A trifle out of superfluity :
 “He had forgotten he had done as much !”
 So had not I !—Henceforth, try as I could
 To take him at his word, there stood by you
 My benefactor—who might speak and laugh
 And urge his nothings—even banter me
 Before you—but my tongue was tied. A dream !
 Let's wake : your husband . . . how you shake at that !
 Good--my revenge !

Eu. Why should I shake ? What forced,
 Or forces me to be Luitolfo's bride ?

Ch. There's my revenge, that nothing forces you !
 No gratitude, no liking of the eye,
 Nor longing of the heart, but the poor bond
 Of habit - here so many times he came,
 So much he spoke,—all these compose the tie

That pulls you from me ! Well, he paid my fines,
 Nor missed a cloak from wardrobe, dish from table—
 —He spoke a good word to the Provost here—
 Held me up when my fortunes fell away
 —It had not looked so well to let me drop—
 Men take pains to preserve a tree-stump, even,
 Whose boughs they played beneath—much more a friend !
 But one grows tired of seeing, after the first,
 Pains spent upon impracticable stuff
 Like me : I could not change—you know the rest.
 I 've spoke my mind too fully out, for once,
 This morning to our Provost ; so ere night
 I leave the city on pain of death—and now
 On my account there 's gallant intercession
 Goes forward—that 's so graceful !—and anon
 He 'll noisily come back : the intercession
 Was made and fails—all 's over for us both—
 'Tis vain contending—I had better go :
 And I do go—and so to you he turns
 Light of a load, and ease of that permits
 His visage to repair its natural bland
 Economy, sore broken late to suit
 My discontent : so, all are pleased—you, with him,
 He with himself, and all of you with me
 —Who, say the citizens, had done far better
 In letting people sleep upon their woes,
 If not possessed with talent to relieve them
 When once they woke ;—but then I had, they 'll say,
 Doubtless some unknown compensating pride
 In what I did—and as I seem content
 With ruining myself, why so should they be,
 And so they are, and so be with his prize
 The devil, when he gets them speedily !
 Why does not your Luitolfo come ? I long
 To don this cloak and take the Lugo path.
 It seems you never loved me, then ?

Eu.

Chiapping !

Ch. Never ?*Eu.* Never.

Ch. That 's sad—say what I might,
 There was no helping being sure this while
 You loved me—love like mine must have return,
 I thought--no river starts but to some sea !
 And had you loved me, I could soon devise
 Some specious reason why you stifled love,
 Some fancied self-denial on your part,
 Which made you choose Luitolfo ; so, excepting
 From the wide condemnation of all here,

One woman ! Well, the other dream may break !
 If I knew any heart, as mine loved you,
 Loved me, tho' in the vilest breast 'twere lodged,
 I should, I think, be forced to love again—
 Else there's no right nor reason in the world !

Eu. "If you knew," say you,—but I did not know—
 That's where you're blind, Chiappino !—a disease
 Which, if I may remove, I'll not repent
 The listening to : you cannot, will not, see
 How, place you but in every circumstance
 Of us, you are just now indignant at,
 You'd be as we.

Ch. I should be ? . . that, again !
 I, to my Friend, my Country and my Love,
 Be as Luitolfo and these Faentines ?

Eu. As we.
Ch. Now, I'll say something to remember !
 I trust in Nature for the stable laws
 Of Beauty and Utility—Spring shall plant,
 And Autumn garner to the end of time :
 I trust in God—the Right shall be the Right
 And other than the Wrong, while He endures—
 I trust in my own soul, that can perceive
 The outward and the inward, Nature's good
 And God's—So—seeing these men and myself,
 Having a right to speak, thus do I speak :
 I'll not curse . . . God bears with them—well may I—
 But I—protest against their claiming me !
 I simply say, if that's allowable,
 I would not . . . broadly . . . do as they have done—
 —God curse this townful of born slaves, bred slaves,
 Branded into the blood and bone, slaves ! Curse
 Whoever loved, above his liberty,
 House, land, or life ! and . . . [A knocking without
 . . . Bless my hero-friend,

Luitolfo !

Eu. How he knocks !
Ch. The peril, Lady !
 "Chiappino, I have run a risk ! My God !
 "How when I prayed the Provost—(he's my friend)—
 "To grant you a week's respite of his sentence
 "That confiscates your goods, and exiles you,
 "He shrugged his shoulder . . . I say, shrugged it ! Yes,
 "And fright of that drove all else from my head.
 "Here's a good purse of *scudi*—off with you !
 "Lest of that shrug come—what God only knows !
 "The *scudi*—friend, they're trash—no thanks, I beg—
 "Take the North gate,—for San Vitale's suburb

" Whose double taxes you appealed against,
 " In discomposure at your ill-success
 " Is apt to stone you : there, there—only go !
 " Beside, Eulalia here looks sleepily—
 " Shake . . . oh, you hurt me, so you squeeze my wrist ! "
 —Is it not thus you'll speak, adventurous friend ?
[As he opens the door, LUITOLFO rushes in, his garments disordered.]

Eu. Luitolfo ! Blood ?

Luit. There's more—and more of it !

Eulalia—take the garment . . . no . . . you, friend !
 You take it and the blood from me—you dare !

Eu. Oh, who has hurt you ? where's the wound ?

Ch. " Who," say you ?

The man with many a touch of virtue yet !
 The Provost's friend has proved too frank of speech
 And this comes of it. Miserable hound !
 This comes of temporising, as I said !
 Here's fruit of your smooth speeches and fair looks !
 Now see my way ! As God lives, I go straight
 To the palace and do justice, once for all !

Luit. What says he ?

Ch. I'll do justice on him !

Luit. Him ?

Ch. The Provost.

Luit. I've just killed him !

Eu. Oh, my God !

Luit. My friend, they're on my trace—they'll have me—now !
 They're round him, busy with him : soon they'll find
 He's past their help, and then they'll be on me !
 Chiappino ! save Eulalia . . . I forget . . .
 Were you not bound . . . for . . .

Ch. Lugo !

Luit. Ah—yes—yes—

That was the point I prayed of him to change.
 Well—go—be happy . . . is Eulalia safe ?
 They're on me !

Ch. 'Tis through me they reach you, then !
 Friend, seem the man you are ! Lock arms—that's right.
 Now tell me what you've done ; explain how you,
 That still professed forbearance, still preached peace,
 Could bring yourself . . .

Luit. What was peace for, Chiappino ?
 I tried peace—did that say that when peace failed
 Strife should not follow ? All my peaceful days
 Were just the prelude to a day like this.
 I cried " You call me ' friend '—save my true friend !
 " Save him, or lose me ! "

Ch. But you never said
 You meant to tell the Provost thus and thus!
Luit. Why should I say it? What else did I mean?
Ch. Well? He persisted?
Luit. . . . Would so order it
 You should not trouble him too soon again—
 I saw a meaning in his eye and lip—
 I poured my heart's store of indignant words
 Out on him—then—I know not.—He retorted—
 And I . . . some staff lay there to hand—I think
 He bade his servants thrust me out—I struck—
 . . . Ah, they come! Fly you, save yourselves, you two!
 The dead back-weight of the beheading axe!
 The glowing trip-hook, thumbscrews and the gadge!
Eu. They do come! Torches in the Place! Farewell—
 Chiappino! You can work no good to us—
 Much to yourself; believe not, all the world
 Must needs be cuised henceforth!
Ch. And you?
Eu. I stay,
Ch. Ha, ha! Now, listen! I am master here!
 This was my coarse disguise—this paper shows
 My path of flight and place of refuge—see—
 Lugo—Argenta—past San Nicolo—
 Ferrara, then to Venice and all's safe!
 Put on the cloak! His people have to fetch
 A compass round about.—There's time enough
 Ere they can reach us—so you straightway make
 For Lugo . . . Nay, he hears not! On with it—
 The cloak, Luitolfo, do you hear me? See—
 He obeys he knows not how.—Then, if I must . . .
 Answer me! Do you know the Lugo gate?
Eu. The north-west gate, over the bridge!
Luit. I know!
Ch. Well, there—you are not frightened? All my route
 Is traced in that—at Venice you'll escape
 Their power! Fulalia—I am master here!
 [Shouts from without. He pushes out LUITOLFO, who
 complics mechanically.
 In time! nay, help me with him—So!—he's gone.
Eu. What have you, done? On you, perchance, all know
 The Provost's hater, will men's vengeance fall
 As our accomplice . . .
Ch. Mere accomplice? See!
 [Putting on LUITOLFO's vest.
 Now, Lady, am I true to my profession,
 Or one of these?
Eu. You take Luitolfo's place?

Ch. Die for him !

Eu. Well done. [Shouts increase]

Ch. How the people tarry !

I can't be silent . . . I must speak . . . or sing—

How natural to sing now !

Eu. Hush and pray !

We are to die—but even I perceive

'Tis not a very hard thing so to die—

My cousin of the pale-blue tearful eyes,

Poor Cesca, suffers more from one day's life

With the stern husband ; Tisbe's heart goes forth

Each evening after that wild son of hers,

To track his thoughtless footstep thro' the streets—

How easy for them both to die like this !

I am not sure that I could live as they.

Ch. Here they come, crowds ! They pass the gate ? Yes !—

No !—

One torch is in the court-yard. Here flock all !

Eu. At least Luitolfo has escaped !—What cries !

Ch. If they would drag one to the market-place,
One might speak there !

Eu. List, list !

Ch. They mount the steps !

Enter the Populace.

Ch. I killed the Provost !

[*The Populace, speaking together.*] 'Twas Chiappino, friends !
Our saviour.—The best man at last as first !

He who first made us see what chains we wore,

He also strikes the blow that shatters them,

He at last saves us—our best citizen !

—Oh, have you only courage to speak now ?

My eldest son was christened a year since

"Cino" to keep Chiappino's name in mind—

Cino, for shortness merely, you observe !

The City 's in our hands.—The guards are fled—

Do you, the cause of all, come down—come down—

Come forth to counsel us, our chief, our king,

Whate'er rewards you ! Choose your own reward !

The peril over, its reward begins !

Come and harangue us in the market-place !

Eu. Chiappino !

Ch. Yes . . . I understand your eyes !

You think I should have promptlier disowned

This deed with its strange unforeseen success

In favour of Luitolfo—but the peril,

So far from ended, hardly seems begun !

To-morrow rather, when a calm succeeds,

We easily shall make him full amends :
 And meantime . . if we save them as they pray,
 And justify the deed by its effects ?

Eu. You would, for worlds, you had denied at once !

Ch. I know my own intention, be assured !
 All's well ! Precede us, fellow-citizens !

PART II.

The Market-place. LUITOLFO in disguise mingling with the Populace assembled opposite the Provost's Palace.

1st Bystander (*to LUIT.*). You, a friend of Luitolfo's ! Then, your friend is vanished,—in all probability killed on the night that his patron the tyrannical Provost was loyally suppressed there, exactly a month ago, by our illustrious fellow-citizen thrice-noble saviour, and new Provost that is like to be, this very morning,—Chiappino !

Luit. He the new Provost ?

2nd. Up those steps will he go, and beneath yonder pillar stand, while Ognibeu, the Pope's Legate from Ravenna, reads the new dignitary's title to the people, according to established usage.—For which reason, there is the assemblage you inquire about.

Luit. Chiappino—the old Provost's successor ? Impossible ! But tell me of that presently—What I would know first of all is, wherefore Luitolfo must so necessarily have been killed on that memorable night ?

3rd. You were Luitolfo's friend ? So was I—Never, if you will credit me, did there exist so poor-spirited a milk-sop ! He, with all the opportunities in the world, furnished by daily converse with our oppressor, would not stir a finger to help us : so when Chiappino rose in solitary majesty and . . . how does one go on saying ? . . dealt the godlike blow,—this Luitolfo, not unreasonably fearing the indignation of an aroused and liberated people, fled precipitately : he may have got trodden to death in the press at the south-east gate, when the Provost's guards fled thro' it to Ravenna, with their wounded master,—if he did not rather hang himself under some hedge.

Luit. Or why not simply have lain perdue in some quiet corner,—such as San Cassiano, where his estate was,—receiving daily intelligence from some sure friend, meanwhile, as to the turn matters were taking here . . . how, for instance, the Provost was not dead after all, only wounded . . or, as to-day's news would seem to prove, how Chiappino was not Brutus the Elder, after all, only the new Provost . . and

thus Luitolfo be enabled to watch a favourable opportunity for returning—might it not have been so?

3rd. Why, he may have taken that care of himself, certainly, for he came of a cautious stock.—I'll tell you how his uncle, just such another gingerly treader on tiptoes with finger on lip, —how he met his death in the great plague-year: *dico vobis!* Hearing that the seventeenth house in a certain street was infected, he calculates to pass it in safety by taking plentiful breath, say, when he shall arrive at the eleventh house; then, scouring by, holding that breath, till he be got so far on the other side as number twenty-three, and thus elude the danger.—And so did he begin—but, as he arrived at thirteen, we will say,—thinking to improve on his precaution by putting up a little prayer to St. Nepomucene of Prague, this exhausted so much of his lungs' reserve, that at sixteen it was clean spent,—consequently at the fatal seventeen he inhaled with a vigour and persistence enough to suck you any latent venom out of the heart of a stone—Ha! ha!

Luit. [Aside.] (If I had not lent that man the money he wanted last spring, I should fear this bitterness was attributable to me.) Luitolfo is dead, then, one may conclude!

3rd. Why, he had a house here, and a woman to whom he was affianced; and as they both pass naturally to the new Provost, his friend and heir . . .

Luit. Ah, I suspected you of imposing on me with your pleasantry—I know Chiappino better!

1st. (Our friend has the bile! after all, I do not dislike finding somebody vary a little this general gape of admiration at Chiappino's glorious qualities—.) Pray, how much may you know of what has taken place in Faenza since that memorable night?

Luit. It is most to the purpose, that I know Chiappino to have been by profession a hater of that very office of Provost, you now charge him with proposing to accept.

1st. Sir, I'll tell you. That night was indeed memorable—up we rose, a mass of us, men, women, children—out fled the guards with the body of the tyrant—we were to defy the world: but, next grey morning, "What will Rome say?" began everybody—you know we are governed by Ravenna, which is governed by Rome). And quietly into the town, by the Ravenna road, comes on muleback a portly personage, Ogniben by name, with the quality of Pontifical Legate—trots briskly thro' the streets humming a "*Cur fremuère gentes,*" and makes directly for the Provost's Palace—there it faces you—"One Messer Chiappino is your leader? I have known three-and-twenty leaders of revolts!" (laughing gently to himself)—"Give me the help of your arm from my mule to yonder steps under the pillar—So! And now, my revolters and good friends, what do

you want? The guards burst into Ravenna last night bearing your wounded Provost—and, having had a little talk with him, I take on myself to come and try appease the disorderliness, before Rome, hearing of it, resort to another method; 'tis I come, and not another, from a certain love I confess to, of composing differences. So, do you understand, you are about to experience this unheard-of tyranny from me, that there shall be no heading nor hanging, no confiscation nor exile,—I insist on your simply pleasing yourselves,—and now, pray, what does please you? To live without any government at all? Or, having decided for one, to see its minister murdered by the first of your body that chooses to find himself wronged, or disposed for reverting to first principles and a Justice anterior to all institutions,—and so will you carry matters, that the rest of the world must at length unite and put down such a den of wild beasts? As for vengeance on what has just taken place,—once for all, the wounded man assures me he cannot conjecture who struck him—and this so earnestly, that one may be sure he knows perfectly well what intimate acquaintance could find admission to speak with him so late that evening—I come not for vengeance therefore, but from pure curiosity to hear what you will do next.”—And thus he ran on, easily and volubly, till he seemed to arrive quite naturally at the praise of Law, Order and Paternal Government by somebody from rather a distance: all our citizens were in the snare, and about to be friends with so congenial an adviser; but that Chiappino suddenly stood forth, spoke out indignantly, and set things right again . . .

Luit. Do you see?—I recognise him there!

3rd. Ay, but mark you, at the end of Chiappino's longest period in praise of a pure Republic. “And by whom do I desire such a government should be administered, perhaps, but by one like yourself?”—returns the Legate—thereupon speaking, for a quarter of an hour together, on the natural and only legitimate government by the Best and Wisest—and it should seem there was soon discovered to be no such vast discrepancy at bottom between this and Chiappino's theory, place but each in its proper light—“Oh, are you there?” quoth Chiappino:—“In that I agree,” returns Chiappino, and so on.

Luit. But did Chiappino cede at once to this?

1st. Why, not altogether at once—for instance, he said that the difference between him and all his fellows was, that they seemed all wishing to be kings in one or another way,—whereas what right, asked he, has any man to wish to be superior to another?—whereat, “Ah, Sir,” answers the Legate, “this is the death of me, so often as I expect something is really going to be revealed to us by you clearer-seers, deeper-thinkers—this—that your right-hand (to speak by a figure) should be found taking up the weapon it displayed so ostentatiously, not to

destroy any dragon in our path, as was prophesied, but simply to cut off its own fellow left-hand—yourself set about attacking yourself—for see now! Here are you who, I make sure, glory exceedingly in knowing the noble nature of the soul, its divine impulses, and so forth; and with such a knowledge you stand, as it were, armed to encounter the natural doubts and fears as to that same inherent nobility, that are apt to waylay us, the weaker ones, in the road of Life,—and when we look eagerly to see them fall before you, lo, round you wheel, only the left-hand gets the blow; one proof of the soul's nobility destroys simply another proof, quite as good, of the same,—you are found delivering an opinion like this! Why, what is this perpetual yearning to exceed, to subdue, to be better than, and a king over, one's fellows,—all that you so disdain,—but the very tendency yourself are most proud of, and under another form, would oppose to it,—only in a lower stage of manifestation? You don't want to be vulgarly superior to your fellows after their poor fashion—to have me hold solemnly up your gown's tail, or hand you an express of the last importance from the Pope, with all these bystanders noticing how unconcerned you look the while—but neither does our gaping friend, the burgess yonder, want the other kind of kingship, that consists in understanding better than his fellows this and similar points of human nature, nor to roll under the tongue this sweeter morsel still, the feeling that, thro' immense philosophy, he does *not* feel, he rather thinks, above you and me!"—And so chatting, they glided off arm-in-arm.

Luit. And the result is . . .

1st. Why, that a month having gone by, the indomitable Chiappino, marrying as he will Luitolfo's love—at all events succeeding to Luitolfo's goods,—becomes the first inhabitant of Faenza, and a proper aspirant to the Provostship—which we assemble here to see conferred on him this morning. The Legate's Guard to clear the way! He will follow presently!

Luit. (*withdrawing a little*). I understand the drift of Eulalia's communications less than ever—yet she surely said, in so many words, that Chiappino was in urgent danger,—wherefore, disregarding her injunctions to continue in my retreat and wait the result of, what she called, some experiment yet in process—I hastened here without her leave or knowledge—what could I else?—Yet if what they say be true . . . if it were for such a purpose, she and Chiappino kept me away . . . Oh, no, no! I must confront him and her before I believe this of them—an' at the word, see!

Enter CHIAPPINO and EULALIA.

Eu. We part here, then? The change in your principles would seem to be complete;

Ch. Now, why refuse to see that in my present course I change no principles, only re-adapt them, and more adroitly? I have despaired of what you may call the material instrumentality of Life: of ever being able to rightly operate on mankind thro' such a deranged machinery as the existing modes of government—but now, if I suddenly discover how to inform these perverted institutions with fresh purpose, bring the functionary limbs once more into immediate communication with, and subjection to, the soul I am about to bestow on them . . . do you see? Why should one desire to invent, so long as it remains possible to renew and transform? When all further hope of the old organisation shall be extinct, then, I grant you, it will be time to try and create another.

Eu. And there being discoverable some hope yet in the hitherto much-abused old system of absolute government by a Provost here, you mean to take your time about endeavouring to realise those visions of a perfect State, we once heard of?

Ch. Say, I would fain realise my conception of a Palace, for instance, and that there is, abstractedly, but a single way of erecting one perfectly; here, in the market-place is my allotted building-ground; here I stand without a stone to lay, or a labourer to help me,—stand, too, during a short day of life, close on which the night comes. On the other hand, circumstances suddenly offer me . . turn and see it . . the old Provost's House to experiment upon—ruinous, if you please, wrongly constructed at the beginning, and ready to tumble now—but materials abound, a crowd of workmen offer their services; here, exists yet a Hall of Audience of originally noble proportions, there, a Guest-chamber of symmetrical design enough; and I may restore, enlarge, abolish, or unite these to heart's content—ought I not rather make the best of such an opportunity, than continue to gaze disconsolately with folded arms on the flat pavement here, while the sun goes slowly down, never to rise again? But you cannot understand this nor me: it is better we shou'd part as you desire.

Eu. So the love breaks away too!

Ch. No, rather my soul's capacity for love widens—needs more than one object to content it,—and, being better instructed, will not persist in seeing all the component parts of love in what is only a single part,—nor in finding the so many and so various loves, united in the love of a woman,—finding all uses in one instrument, as the savage has his sword, sceptre and idol, all in one club-stick. Love is a very compound thing. I shall give the intellectual part of my love to Men, the mighty dead, or illustrious living; and determine to call a mere sensual instinct by as few fine names as possible. What do I lose?

Eu. Nay, I only think, what do I lose! and, one more word—which shall complete my instruction—does Friendship go

too?—What of Luitolfo—the author of your present prosperity?

Ch. How the author?—

Eu. That blow now called yours . . .

Ch. Struck without principle or purpose, as by a blind natural operation—and to which all my thoughts and life directly and advisedly tended. I would have struck it, and could not. He would have done his utmost to avoid striking it, yet did so. I dispute his right to that deed of mine—a final action with him, from the first effect of which he fled away—a mere first step with me, on which I base a whole mighty superstructure of good to follow. Could he get good from it?

Eu. So we profess, so we perform!

Enter OGNIBEN. EULALIA stands apart.

Ogni. I have seen three-and-twenty leaders of revolts!—By your leave, Sir! Perform? What does the lady say of Performing?

Ch. Only the trite saying, that we must not trust Profession, only Performance.

Ogni. She'll not say that, Sir, when she knows you longer: you'll instruct her better. Ever judge of men by their professions! For tho' the bright moment of promising is but a moment and cannot be prolonged, yet, if sincere in its moment's extravagant goodness, why, trust it and know the man by it, I say—not by his performance—which is half the world's work, interfere as the world needs must with its accidents and circumstances,—the profession was purely the man's own! I judge people by what they might be,—not are, nor will be.

Ch. But have there not been found, too, performing natures, not merely promising?

Ogni. Plenty: little Bindo of our town, for instance, promised his friend, great ugly Masaccio, once, "I will repay you!"—for a favour done him: so when his father came to die, and Bindo succeeded to the inheritance, he sends straightway for Masaccio and shares all with him; gives him half the land, half the money, half the kegs of wine in the cellar. "Good," say you—and it is good: but had little Bindo found himself possessor of all this wealth some five years before—on the happy night when Masaccio procured him that interview in the garden with his pretty cousin Lisa—instead of being the beggar he then was,—I am bound to believe that in the warm moment of promise he would have given away all the wine-kegs, and all the money, and all the land, and only reserved to himself some hut on a hill-top hard by, whence he might spend his life in looking and seeing his friend enjoy himself: he meant fully that much, but the world interfered!—To our busi-

ness—did I understand you just now within-doors? You are not going to marry your old friend's love, after all?

Ch. I must have a woman that can sympathise with, and appreciate me, I told you.

Ogni. Oh, I remember! you, the greater nature, needs must have a lesser one (—avowedly lesser—contest with you on that score would never do!)—such a nature must comprehend you, as the phrase is, accompany and testify of your greatness from point to point onward: why, that were being not merely as great as yourself, but greater considerably! Meantime, might not the more bounded nature as reasonably count on your appreciation of it, rather?—on your keeping close by it, so far as you both go together, and then going on by yourself as far as you please? So God serves us!

Ch. And yet a woman that could understand the whole of me, to whom I could reveal alike the strength and the weakness—

Ogni. Ah, my friend, wish for nothing so foolish! Worship your love, give her the best of you to see; be to her like the Western lands (they bring us such strange news of) to the Spanish Court—send her only your lumps of gold, fans of feathers, your spirit-like birds, and fruits and gems—so shall you, what is unseen of you, be supposed altogether a Paradise by her,—as these Western lands by Spain—tho' I warrant there is filth, red baboons, ugly reptiles and squalor enough, which they bring Spain as few samples of as possible. Do you want your mistress to respect your body generally? Offer her your mouth to kiss—don't strip off your boot and put your foot to her lips! You understand my humour by this time? I help men to carry out their own principle: if they please to say two and two make five, I assent, if they will but go on and say, four and four make ten!

Ch. But these are my private affairs—what I desire you to occupy yourself about, is my public appearance presently: for when the people hear that I am appointed Provost, tho' you and I may thoroughly discern—and easily, too—the right principle at bottom of such a movement, and how my republicanism remains thoroughly unaltered, only takes a form of expression hitherto commonly judged . . and heretofore by myself . . incompatible with its existence . . when thus I reconcile myself to an old form of government instead of proposing a new one . . -

Ogni. Why, you must deal with people broadly. Begin at a distance from this matter and say,—new truths, old truths! why, there is nothing new possible to be revealed to us in the moral world—we know all we shall ever know, and it is 'for simply reminding us, by their various respective expedients. how we do know this and the other matter, that men get called

prophets, poets and the like. A philosopher's life is spent in discovering that, of the half-dozen truths he knew when a child, such an one is a lie, as the world states it in set terms; and then, after a weary lapse of years, and plenty of hard thinking, it becomes a truth again after all, as he happens to newly consider it and view it in a different relation with the others—and so he restates it, to the confusion of somebody else in good time.—As for adding to the original stock of truths,—impossible!—So you see the expression of them is the grand business:—you have got a truth in your head about the right way of governing people, and you took a mode of expressing it—which now you confess to be imperfect—but what then? There is truth in Falsehood, Falsehood in Truth—No man ever told one great truth, that I know, without the help of a good dozen of lies at least, generally unconscious ones: and as when a child comes in breathlessly and relates a strange story, you try to conjecture from the very falsities in it, what the reality was,—do not conclude that he saw nothing in the sky, because he assuredly did not see a flying horse there as he says,—so, thro' the contradictory expression, do you see, men should look painfully for, and trust to arrive eventually at, what you call the true principle at bottom. Ah, what an answer is there! to what will it not prove applicable!—“Contradictions?”—Of course there were, say you!

Ch. Still, the world at large may call it inconsistency, and what shall I say in reply?

Ogni. Why, look you, when they tax you with tergiversation or duplicity, you may answer—you begin to perceive that, when all's done and said, both great parties in the state, the advocates of change in the present system of things, and the opponents of it, patriot and anti-patriot, are found working together for the common good, and that in the midst of their efforts for and against its progress, the world somehow or other still advances—to which result they contribute in equal proportions, those who spent their life in pushing it onward as those who gave theirs to the business of pulling it back—now, if you found the world stand still between the opposite forces, and were glad, I should conceive you—but it steadily advances, you rejoice to see! By the side of such a rejoicer, the man who only winks as he keeps cunning and quiet, and says, “Let yonder hot-headed fellow fight out my battle; I, for one, shall win in the end by the blows he gives, and which I ought to be giving”—even he seems graceful in his avowal, when one considers that he might say, “I shall win quite as much by the blows our antagonist gives him, and from which he saves me—I thank the antagonist equally!” Moreover, you must enlarge on the loss of the edge of party-animosity with age and experience——

Ch. And naturally time must wear off such asperities—the bitterest adversaries get to discover certain points of similarity between each other, common sympathies—do they not?

Ogni. Ay, had the young David but sate first to dine on his cheeses with the Philistine, he had soon discovered an abundance of such common sympathies—He of Gath, it is recorded, was born of a father and mother, had brothers and sisters like another man,—they, no more than the sons of Jesse, were used to eat each other; but, for the sake of one broad antipathy that had existed from the beginning, David slung the stone, cut off the giant's head, made a spoil of it, and after ate his cheeses alone, with the better appetite, for all I can learn. My friend, as you, with a quickened eye-sight, go on discovering much good on the worse side, remember that the same process should proportionately magnify and demonstrate to you the much more good on the better side—and when I profess no sympathy for the Goliaths of our time, and you object that a large nature should sympathise with every form of intelligence, and see the good in it, however limited—I answer, so I do—but preserve the proportions of my sympathy, however finer or wider I may extend its action. I desire to be able, with a quickened eye-sight, to descry beauty in corruption where others see foulness only,—but I hope I shall also continue to see a redoubled beauty in the higher forms of matter, where already everybody sees no foulness at all. I must retain, too, my old power of selection, and choice of appropriation, to apply to such new gifts . . else they only dazzle instead of enlightening me. God has his Archangels and consorts with them—tho' he made too, and intimately sees what is good in, the worm. Observe, I speak only as you profess to think and so ought to speak—I do justice to your own principles, that is all!

Ch. But you very well know that the two parties do, on occasion, assume each other's characteristics: what more disgusting, for instance, than to see how promptly the newly emancipated slave will adopt, in his own favour, the very measures of precaution which pressed sorely on himself as institutions of the tyranny he has just escaped from.—Do the classes, hitherto without opinion, get leave to express it? there is a confederacy immediately, from which—exercise your individual right and dissent, and woe be to you!

Ogni. And a journey over the sea to you!—That is the generous way. Say—emancipated slaves, the first excess, and off I go! The first time a poor devil, who has been bastinadoed steadily his whole life long, finds himself let alone and able to legislate, so begins pettishly, while he rubs his soles, “Woe be to whoever brings anything in the shape of a stick

this way,"—you, rather than give up the very innocent pleasure of carrying one to switch flies with,—you go away to everybody's sorrow! Yet you were quite reconciled to staying at home while the governors used to pass, every now and then, some such edict as "Let no man indulge in owning a stick which is not thick enough to chastise our slaves, if need require." Well—there are pre-ordained hierarchies among us, and a profane vulgar subjected to a different law altogether—yet I am rather sorry you should see it so clearly—for, do you know what is to . . . all but save you at the Day of Judgment, all you Men of Genius? It is this—that, while you generally began by pulling down God, and went on to the end of your life, in one effort at setting up your own Genius in his place,—still, the last, bitterest concession wrung with the utmost unwillingness from the experience of the very loftiest of you, was invariably—would one think it?—that the rest of mankind, down to the lowest of the mass, stood not, nor ever could stand, just on a level and equality with yourselves.—That will be a point in the favour of all such, I hope and believe!

Ch. Why, men of genius are usually charged, I think, with doing just the reverse; and at once acknowledging the natural inequality of mankind, by themselves participating in the universal craving after, and deference to, the civil distinctions which represent it. You wonder they pay such undue respect to titles and badges of superior rank!

Ogni. Not I! (always on your own ground and showing, be it noted!) Who doubts that, with a weapon to brandish, a man is the more formidable? Titles and badges are exercised as such a weapon, to which you and I look up wistfully.—We could pin lions with it moreover, while in its present owner's hands it hardly prods rats. Nay, better than a mere weapon of easy mastery and obvious use, it is a mysterious divining rod that may serve you in undreamed-of ways.—Beauty, Strength, Intellect—men often have none of these and yet conceive pretty accurately what kind of advantages they would bestow on the possessor.—You know at least what it is you make up your mind to forego, and so can apply the fittest substitute in your power; wanting Beauty, you cultivate Good Humour, missing Wit, you get Riches; but the mystic unimaginable operation of that gold collar and string of Latin names which suddenly turned poor stupid little peevish Cecco of our town into natural Lord of the best of us—a Duke, he is now! there indeed is a Virtue to be reverenced!

Ch. Ay, by the vulgar—not by Messere Stiatta the poet, who pays more assiduous court to him than anybody.

Ogni. What else should Stiatta pay court to? He has

talent, not honour and riches—men naturally covet what they have not.

Ch. No—or Cecco would covet talent, which he has not, whereas he covets more riches, of which he has plenty already.

Ogni. Because a purse added to a purse makes the holder twice as rich—but just such another talent as Stiatta's, added to what he now possesses, what would that profit him? Give the talent a purse indeed, to do something with! But lo, how we keep the good people waiting. I only desired to do justice to the noble sentiments which animate you, and which you are too modest to duly enforce. Come, to our main business: shall we ascend the steps? I am going to propose you for Provost to the people; they know your antecedents, and will accept you with a joyful unanimity: whereon I confirm their choice. Rouse up! you are nerving yourself to an effort? Beware the disaster of Messer Stiatta we were talking of—who determining to keep an equal mind and constant face on whatever might be the fortune of his last new poem with our townsmen,—heard too plainly “hiss, hiss, hiss,” increase every moment, till at last the man fell senseless—not perceiving that the portentous sounds had all the while been issuing from between his own nobly clenched teeth, and nostrils narrowed by resolve!

Ch. Do you begin to throw off the mask? to jest with me, having got me effectually into your trap?

Ogni. Where is the trap, my friend? You hear what I engage to do, for my part—you, for yours, have only to fulfil your promise made just now within doors, of professing unlimited obedience to Rome's authority in my person—and I shall authorise no more than the simple re-establishment of the Provostship and the conferment of its privileges upon yourself—the only novel stipulation being a birth of the peculiar circumstances of the time.

Ch. And that stipulation?

Ogni. Oh, the obvious one—that in the event of the discovery of the actual assailant of the late Provost . . .

Ch. Ha!

Ogni. Why, he shall suffer the proper penalty, of course what did you expect?

Ch. Who heard of this?

Ogni. Rather, who needed to hear of this?

Ch. Can it be, the popular rumour never reached you . . .

Ogni. Many more such rumours reach me, friend, than I choose to receive: those which wait longest have best chance—has the present one sufficiently waited? Now is its time for entry with effect. See the good people crowding about yonder palace-steps—which we may not have to ascend after all!—my

good friends—(nay, two or three of you will answer every purpose)—who was it fell upon and proved nearly the death of your late Provost?—his successor desires to hear, that his day of inauguration may be graced by the act of prompt, bare justice we all anticipate? Who dealt the blow that night, does anybody know?

Luitolfo. [coming forward.] I!

All. Luitolfo!

Luit. I avow the deed, justify and approve it, and stand forth now, to relieve my friend of an unearned responsibility.—Having taken thought, I am grown stronger—I shall shrink from nothing that awaits me. Nay, Chiappino—we are friends still—I dare say there is some proof of your superior nature in this starting aside, strange as it seems at first. So, they tell me, my horse is of the right stock, because a shadow in the path frightens him into a frenzy, makes him dash my brains out. I understand only the dull mule's way of standing stockishly, plodding soberly, suffering on occasion a blow or two with due patience.

Eu. I was determined to justify my choice, Chiappino; to let Luitolfo's nature vindicate itself. Henceforth we are undivided, whatever be our fortune.

Ogni. Now, in these last ten minutes of silence, what have I been doing, deem you? Putting the finishing stroke to a homily of mine, I have long taken thought to perfect, on the text "Let whoso thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." To your house, Luitolfo!—Still silent, my patriotic friend? Well, that is a good sign, however! And you will go aside for a time? That is better still. I understand—it would be easy for you to die of remorse here on the spot, and shock us all, but you will live and grow worthy of coming back to us one day. There, I will tell everybody; and you only do right to believe you will get better as you get older! All men do so,—they are worst in childhood, improve in manhood, and get ready in old age for another world. Youth, with its Beauty and Grace, would seem bestowed on us for some such reason as to make us partly endurable till we have time for really becoming so of ourselves, without their aid, when they leave us. "The sweetest child we all smile on for his pleasant want of the whole world to break up, or suck in his mouth, seeing no other good in it—would be rudely handled by that world's inhabitants, if he retained those angelic infantine desires when he has grown six feet high, black and bearded: but, little by little, he sees fit to forego claim after claim on the world, puts up with a less and less share of its good as his proper portion,—and when the octogenarian asks barely a sup of gruel and a fire of dry sticks, and thanks you as for his full allowance, and right in the common good of life,—hoping nobody may murder him,—he

who began by asking and expecting the whole of us to bow down in worship to him,—why, I say he is advanced, far onward, very far, nearly out of sight like our friend Chiappino yonder!—And now—(Ay, good-bye to you! He turns round the North-west gate—going to Lugo again? Good-bye!)—And now give thanks to God, the keys of the Provost's Palace to me, and yourselves to profitable meditation at home. I have known *Four-and-twenty* leaders of revolts!—

S T R A F F O R D :

An Historical Tragedy.

Dedicated,

IN ALL AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION,

TO

WILLIAM C. MACREADY, Esq.,

BY

HIS MOST GRATEFUL AND DEVOTED FRIEND,

R. B.

April 23, 1837.

PREFACE

I HAD for some time been engaged n a Poem of a very different nature, when induced to make the present attempt ; and am not without apprehension that my eagerness to freshen a jaded mind by diverting it to the healthy natures of a grand epoch, may have operated unsavourably on the represented play, which is one of Action in Character, rather than Character in Action. To remedy this, in some degree, considerable curtailment will be necessary, and, in a few instances, the supplying details not required, I suppose, by the mere reader. While a trifling success would much gratify, failure will not wholly discourage me from another effort : experience is to come, and earnest endeavour may yet remove many disadvantages.

The portraits are, I think, faithful ; and I am exceedingly fortunate in being able, in proof of this, to refer to the subtle and eloquent exposition of the characters of Eliot and Strafford, in the Lives of Eminent British Statesmen, now in the course of publication in Lardner's Cyclopædia, by a writer whom I am proud to call my friend ; and whose biographies of Hampden, Pym, and Vane, will, I am sure, fitly illustrate the present year —the Second Centenary of the Trial concerning Ship-Money. My Carlisle, however, is purely imaginary : I at first sketched her singular likeness roughly in, as suggested by Matthew and the memoir-writers—but it was too artificial, and the substituted outline is exclusively from Voiture and Waller.

The Italian boat-song in the last scene is from Redi's *Bacco*, long since naturalized in the joyous and delicate version of Leigh Hunt.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

(*Theatre-Royal, Covent Garden, May 1, 1837.*)

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| CHARLES THE FIRST | Mr. DALE. |
| Earl of HOLLAND | „ HUCKEL. |
| Lord SAVILE | „ TILBURY. |
| Sir HENRY VANE | „ THOMPSON. |
| WENTWORTH, Viscount WENT- WORTH, Earl of STRAFFORD . . | „ MACREADY. |
| JOHN PYM | VANDENHOFF. |
| JOHN HAMPDEN | „ HARRIS. |
| The younger VANE | „ J. WEBSTER. |
| DENZIL HOLLIS | „ G. BENNET. |
| BENJAMIN RUDYARD | „ PRITCHARD. |
| NATHANIEL FIENNES | „ WORREL. |
| Earl of LOUDON | „ BENDER. |
| MAXWELL, <i>Usher of the Black Rod</i> . . | „ RANSFORD. |
| BALFOUR, <i>Constable of the Tower</i> . . | „ COLLETT. |
| A Puritan | „ WEBSTER. |
| Queen HENRIETTA | Miss VINCENT. |
| LUCY PERCY, Countess of CARLISLE . . | „ HELEN FAUCIT. |

*Presbyterians, Scots Commissioners, Adherents of Strafford,
Secretaries, Officers of the Court, etc. Two of Strafford's
Children.*

STRAFFORD.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A House near Whitehall.*

HAMPDEN, HOLLIS, *the younger VANE*, RUDYARD, FIENNES, and many of the Presbyterian Party: LOUDON and other Scots Commissioners: some seated, some standing beside a table strewn over with papers, etc.

Vane. I say, if he be here . . .

Rud. And he is here!

Hol. For England's sake let every man be still
Nor speak of him, so much as say his name,
Till Pym rejoin us! Rudyard—Vane—remember
One rash conclusion may decide our course
And with it England's fate—think—England's fate!
Hampden, for England's sake they should be still!

Vane. You say so, Hollis? well, I must be still!
It is indeed too bitter that one man—
Any one man . . .

Rud. You are his brother, Hollis!

Hamp. Shame on you, Rudyard! time to tell him that,
When he forgets the Mother of us all.

Rud. Do I forget her? . . .

Hamp. —You talk idle hate
Against her foe: is that so strange a thing?
Is hating Wentworth all the help she needs?

A Puritan. The Philistine strode, cursing as he went:
But David—five smooth pebbles from the brook
Within his scrip . . .

Rud. —Be you as still as David!

Fien. Here's Rudyard not ashamed to wag a tongue
Stiff with ten years' disuse of Parliaments;
Why, when the last sate, Wentworth sate with us!

Rud. Let's hope for news of them now he returns :
—But I'll abide Pym's coming.

Vane. Now by Heaven
They may be cool that can, silent that can,
Sonic have a gift that way : Wentworth is here—
Here—and the King's safe closeted with him
Ere this ! and when I think on all that's past
Since that man left us—how his single arm
Roll'd back the good of England, roll'd it back
And set the woeful Past up in its place . . .

A Puritan. Exalting Dagon where the Ark should be !
Vane. . . . How that man has made firm the fickle King
—Hampden, I will speak out !—in aught he feared
To venture on before ; taught Tyranny
Her dismal trade, the use of all her tools,
To ply the scourge yet screw the gag so close
That strangled agony bleeds mute to death :
—How he turns Ireland to a private stage
For training infant villainies, new ways
Of wringing treasure out of tears and gore,
Unheard oppressions nourished in the dark
To try how much Man's nature can endure
—If he dies under it, what harm ? if not . . .

Fien. Why, one more trick is added to the rest
Worth a King's knowing—

Rud. —And what Ireland bears
England may learn to bear.

Vane. . . . How all this while
That man has set himself to one dear task,
The bringing Charles to relish more and more
Power . . .

Rud. Power without law . . .

Fien. Power and blood too . . .

Vane. . . . Can I be still ?

Hamp. For that you should be still.

Vane. Oh, Hampden, then and now ! The year he left us
The People by its Parliament could wrest
The Bill of Rights from the reluctant King :
And now,—he'll find in an obscure small room
A stealthy gathering of great-hearted men
That take up England's cause : England is—here !

Hamp. And who despairs of England ?

Rud. That do I
If Wentworth is to rule her. I am sick
To think her wretched masters, Hamilton,
The muckworm Cottington, the maniac Laud,
May yet be longed for back again. I say
I do despair.

Vane. And, Rudyard, I'll say this—
 And, (*turning to the rest*) all true men say after me ! not loud—
 But solemnly, and as you'd say a prayer :
 This Charles, who treads our England under foot,
 Has just so much— it may be fear or craft—
 As bids him pause at each fresh outrage ; friends,
 He needs some sterner hand to grasp his own.
 Some voice to ask, “ Why shrink ?—am I not by ? ”
 —A man that England loved for serving her,
 Found in his heart to say, “ I know where best
 The iron heel shall bruise her, for she leans
 Upon me when you trample.” Witness, you !
 But inasmuch as life is hard to take
 From England . . .

Many Voices. Go on, Vane ! 'Tis well said, Vane !

Vane. . . . Who has not so forgotten Runnymead . . .

Voices. 'Tis well and bravely spoken, Vane ! Go on !

Vane. . . . There are some little signs of late she knows
 The ground no place for her ! no place for her !
 When the King beckons—and beside him stands
 The same bad man once more, with the same smile,
 And the same savage gesture ! Now let England
 Make proof of us.

Voices. Strike him—the Renegade—

Hannan—Ahithophel—

Hamp. (*To the Scots.*) Gentlemen of the North,
 It was not thus the night your claims were urged,
 And we pronounced the League and Covenant
 Of Scotland to be England's cause as well !
 Vane, there, sate motionless the whole night through.

Vane. Hampden . . .

Fien. Stay Vane !

Lou. Be patient, gallant Vane !

Vane. Mind how you counsel patience, Loudon ! you
 Have still a Parliament, and a brave League
 To back it ; you are free in Scotland still—
 While we are brothers (as these hands are knit
 So let our hearts be !)—hope's for England yet !
 But know you why this Wentworth comes ? to quench
 This faintest hope ? that he brings war with him ?
 Know you this Wentworth ? What he dares ?

Lou. Dear Vane,

We know—'tis nothing new . . .

Vane. And what's new, then,

In calling for his life ? Why Pym himself . . .

You must have heard--ere Wentworth left our cause
 He would see Pym first ; there were many more
 Strong on the People's side and friends of his,—

Eliot that's dead, Rudyard and Hampden here,
 But Wentworth cared not for them ; only, Pym
 He would see—Pym and he were sworn, they say,
 To live and die together—so they met
 At Greenwich : Wentworth, you are sure, was long,
 Specious enough, the devil's argument
 Lost nothing in his lips ; he'd have Pym own
 A Patriot could not do a purer thing
 Than follow in his track ; they two combined
 Could put down England. Well, Pym heard him out—
 One glance—you know Pym's eye—one word was all :
 " You leave us, Wentworth : while your head is on
 " I'll not leave you."

Hamp. Has Pym left Wentworth, then ?
 Has England lost him ? Will you let him speak,
 Or put your crude surmises in his mouth ?
 Away with this ! (*To the rest.*) Will you have Pym or Vane ?

Voice. Wait Pym's arrival ! Pym shall speak ! Meanwhile

Hamp. Let Loudon read the Parliament's report
 From Edinburgh : our last hope, as Vane says,
 Is in the stand it makes. Loudon !

Vane. (*As Loudon is about to read*) —No—no—
 Silent I can be : not indifferent !

Hamp. Then each keep silence, praying God a space
 That he will not cast England quite away
 In this her visitation ! (*All assume a posture of reverence.*)

A Puritan. Seven years long
 The Midianite drove Israel into dens
 And caves.

Till God sent forth a mighty man,

(*Pym enters.*)

Even Gideon ! (*All start up.*)

Pym. Wentworth's come : he has not reached
 Whitehall : they've hurried up a Council there,
 To lose no time and find him work enough.
 Where's Loudon ? Your Scots' Parliament . . .

Lou. Is firm :
 We were about to read reports . . .

Pym. The King
 Has just dissolved your Parliament.

Lou. and other of the Scots. Great God !
 An oath-breaker ! Stand by us England then !

Pym. The King's too sanguine ; doubtless Wentworth's here ;
 But still some little form might be kept up.

Hol. Now speak, Vane ! Rudyard, you had much to say !

Hamp. The rumour's false, then . . .

Pym.

Ay, the Court gives out
His own concerns have brought him back: I know
'Tis Charles recalls him: he's to supersede
The tribe of Cottingtons and Hamiltons
Whose part is played: there's talk enough, by this,—
Merciful talk, the King thinks: time is now
To turn the record's last and bloody leaf
That, chronicling a Nation's great despair,
Tells they were long rebellious, and their Lord
Indulgent, till, all kind expedients tried,
He drew the sword on them, and reigned in peace.
Laud's laying his religion on the Scots
Was the last gentle entry:—the new page
Shall run, the King thinks, "Wentworth thrust it down
At the sword's point."

A Puritan. I'll do your bidding, Pym,—
England's and your's . . . one blow!

Pym.

A glorious thing—
We all say, friends, it is a glorious thing
To right that England! Heaven grows dark above,—
Let's snatch one moment ere the thunder fall
To say how well the English spirit comes out
Beneath it! all have done their best, indecd,
From lion Eliot, that grand Englishman,
To the least here: and who, the least one here,
When She is saved (and her redemption dawns
Dimly, most dimly, but it dawns—it dawns)—
Who'd give at any price his hope away
Of being named along with the Great Men?
One would not . . . no, one would not give that up!

Hamp. And one name shall be dearer than all names:
When children, yet unborn, are taught that name
After their fathers',—taught one matchless man . . .

Pym. . . . Saved England?

What if Wentworth's should be still

That name?

Rud. and others. We have just said it, Pym! His death
Saves her!

Fieh. We said that! There's no way beside!

A Puritan. I'll do your bidding, Pym! They struck down Joab
And purged the land.

Vane. No villainous striking-down!

Rud. No—a calm vengeance: let the whole land rise
And shout for it. No Feltons!

Pym. Rudyard no.

England rejects all Feltons; most of all
Since Wentworth . . .

Hampden, say the praise again
 That England will award me . . . But I'll think
 You know me, all of you. Then, I believe,
 —Spite of the past,—Wentworth rejoins you, friends !

Rud. and others. Wentworth ! apostate . . .

Vane. Wentworth, double-dyed

A traitor ! Is it Pym, indeed . . .

Pym. . . . Who says

Vane never knew that Wentworth—loved that Wentworth—
 Felt glad to stroll with him, arm lock'd in arm,

Along the streets to see the People pass

And read in every island:countenance

Fresh argument for God against the King.—

Never sate down . . . say, in the very house

Where Eliot's brow grew broad with noble thoughts

(You've joined us, Hampden, Hollis, you as well,)

And then left talking over Gracchus' death . . .

Vane. . . . To frame, we know it, Pym, the choicest clause
 In the Petition of Rights : which Wentworth framed
 A month before he took at the King's hand
 His Northern Presidency, which that Bill
 Denounced . . .

Rud. And infamy along with it !

A Puritan. For whoso putteth his right-hand to the plough
 And turneth back . . .

Pym. Never more, never more
 Walked we together ! Most alone I went ;
 I have had friends—all here are fast my friends—
 But I shall never quite forget that friend !

(After a pause) And yet it could not but be real in him !

You Vane, you Rudyard, have no right to trust

That Wentworth . . . O will no one hope with me ?

—Vane—think you Wentworth will shed English blood
 Like water ?

A Puritan. Ireland is Aceldama !

Pym. Will he turn Scotland to a hunting-ground
 To please the King, now that he knows the King ?
 The People or the King ? The People, Hampden,
 Or the King . . . and that King—Charles ! Will no one
 hope ?

Hamp. Pym, we do know you : you'll not set your heart
 On any baseless thing : but say one deed

Of Wentworth's, since he left us . . . (*Shouting without.*)

Vane. Pym, he comes
 And they shout for him !—Wentworth !—he's with Charles—
 The king embracing him—now—as we speak . . .
 And he, to be his match in courtesies,
 Taking the whole war's risk upon himself !—

Now—while you tell us here how changed he is—
Do you hear, Pym? The People shout for him!

Fieri. We'll not go back, now! Hollis has no brother—
Vane has no father . . .

Vane. Pym should have no friend!
Stand you firm, Pym! Eliot's gone, Wentworth's lost,
We have but you, and stand you very firm!
Truth is eternal, come below what will,
But . . . I know not . . . if you should fail . . . O God!
O God!

Pym (apart and in thought). And yet if 'tis a dream, no
more,
That Wentworth chose their side, and brought the King
To love it as though Laud had loved it first,
And the Queen after—that he led their cause
Calm to success and kept it spotless through,
So that our very eyes could look upon
The travail of our soul, and close content
That violence, which something mars even Right
That sanctions it, had taken off no grace
From its serene regard. Only a dream!

Hamp. Proceed to England's work: who reads the list?
A Voice. "Ship-money is refused or fiercely paid
In every county, save the northern ones
Where Wentworth's influence" . . . (*Renewed shouting.*)

Vane (passionately striking the table). I, in England's
name
Declare her work, this way, at end! till now—
Up to this moment—peaceful strife was well!
We English had free leave to think: till now,
We had a shadow of a Parliament:
'Twas well: but all is changed: they threaten us:
They'll try brute-force for law—here—in our land!

Many Voices. True hearts with Vane! The old true hearts
with Vane!
Vane. Till we crush Wentworth for her, there's no act
Serves England!

Voice. Vane for England!
Pym (as he passes slowly before them). Pym should be
Something to England! I seek Wentworth, friends!

SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

Enter CARLISLE and WENTWORTH.

Went. And the King?

Car. Dear Wentworth, lean on me; sit then;
I'll tell you all; this horrible fatigue
Will kill you.

Went. No; or—Lucy, just your arm;
I'll not sit till I've cleared this up with him:
After that, rest. The King?

Car. Confides in you.

Went. Why? why now?
—They have kind throats, the People!
Shout for me . . . they!—poor fellows.

Car. Did they shout?
—We took all measures to keep off the crowd—
Did they shout for you?

Went. Wherefore should they not?
Does the King take such measures for himself?
Beside, there's such a dearth of malcontents,
You say?

Car. I said but few dared carp at you . . .
Went. At me? at us, Carlisle! The King and I!
He's surely not disposed to let me bear
Away the fame from him of these late deeds
In Ireland? I am yet his instrument,
Be it for well or ill?

Car. He trusts me then?
The King, dear Wentworth, purposes, I know
To grant you, in the face of all the Court . . .

Went. All the Court! Evermore the Court about us!
Savile and Holland, Hamilton and Vane
About us,—then the King will grant me . . . Lady,
Will the King leave these—leave all these—and say
“Tell me your whole mind, Wentworth!”

Car. But you said
You would be calm.

Went. Lucy, and I am calm!
How else shall I do all I come to do,
—Broken, as you may see, body and mind—
How shall I serve the King? time wastes meanwhile,
You have not told me half . . . His footstep! No.
—But now, before I meet him,—(I am calm)—
Why does the King distrust me?

Car. He does not
Distrust you.
Went. Lucy, you can help me . . . you
Have even seemed to care for me : help me !
Is it the Queen ?

Car. No—not the Queen—the party
That poisons the Queen's ear,—Savile—and Holland . . .
Went. I know—I know—and Vane, too, he's one too ?
Go on—and he's made Secretary— Well ?
— Or leave them out and go straight to the charge !
The charge !

Car. O there's no charge—no precise charge—
Only they sneer, make light of . . . one may say
Nibble at what you do.

Went. I know : but, Lucy,
Go on, dear Lucy—Oh I need you so !
I reckoned on you from the first !—Go on !
. . . Was sure could I once see this gentle girl
When I arrived, she'd throw an hour away
To help her weary friend. . . .

Car. You thought of me,
Dear Wentworth ?

Went. . . . But go on ! The People here . . .
Car. They do not think your Irish Government
Of that surpassing value . . .

Went. The one thing
Of value ! The one service that the crown
May count on ! All that keeps these very things
In power, to vex me . . . not that they do vex me,
Only it might vex some to hear that service
Decried—the sole support that's left the King !

Car. So the Archbishop says.
Went. Ah ? well, perhaps
The only hand held up in its defence
May be old Laud's !

These Hollands, then, these Saviles
Nibble ? They nibble ?—that's the very word !

Car. Your profit in the Customs, Bristol says, . . .

Went. Enough ! 'tis too unworthy,—I am not
So patient as I thought !

What's Pym about ?

Car. Pym ?

Went. Pym and the People.

Car. Oh, the Faction !
Extinct—of no account—there'll never be
Another Parliament.

Went. Tell Savile that !
You may know—(ay, you do—the creatures here

Never forget !) that in my earliest life
 I was not . . . not what I am now ! The King
 May take my word on points concerning Pym
 Before Lord Savile's, Lucy, or if not,
 Girl, they shall ruin their vile selves, not me,
 These Vanes and Hollands—I'll not be their tool—
 Pym would receive me yet !

—But then the King !—

I'll bear it all. The King—where is he, girl ?

Car. He is apprised that you are here : be calm !

Went. And why not meet me now ? Ere now ? You said
 He sent for me . . . he longed for me !

Car. Because . . .

He is now . . . I think a Council's sitting now
 About this Scots' affair . . .

Went. A Council sits ?

They have not taken a decided course
 Without me in this matter ?

Car. I should say . . .

Went. The War ? They cannot have agreed to that ?
 Not the Scots' War ?—without consulting me—
 Me—that am here to show how rash it is,
 How easy to dispense with ?

—Ah, you too

Against me ! well,—the King may find me here.

(As CARLISLE is going.)—Forget it, Lucy : cares make peevish :
 mine

Weigh me (but 'tis a secret) to my grave.

Car. For life or death I am your own, dear friend !

(Aside.) I could not tell him . . . sick too ! . . . And the King
 Shall love him ! Wentworth here, who can withstand
 His look ?—And he did really think of me ?

O 'twas well done to spare him all the pain !

Went. Heartless ! . . . but all are heartless here. [Exit.

Go now,

Forsake the People !

—I did not forsake

The People : they shall know it . . . when the King
 Will trust me !—who trusts all beside at once
 While I . . . have not spoke Vane and Savile fair,
 And am not trusted : have but saved the Throne :
 Have not picked up the Queen's glove prettily,
 And am not trusted !

But he'll see me now :

And Weston's dead—and the Queen's English now—
 More English—oh, one earnest word will brush
 These reptiles from . . . (footsteps within.)

The step I know so well !

'Tis Charles!—But now—to tell him . . . no—to ask him
 What's in me to distrust:—or, best begin
 By proving that this frightful Scots affair
 Is just what I foretold: I'll say, "My liege" . . .
 And I feel sick, now! and the time is come—
 And one false step no way to be repaired . . .
 You were revenged, Pym, could you look on me!

(Pym enters.)

Went. I little thought of you just then.
Pym. No? I
 Think always of you, Wentworth.

Went. (Aside.) The old voice!
 I wait the King, Sir.
Pym. True—you look so pale:
 A Council sits within; when that breaks up
 He'll see you.

Went. Sir, I thank you.
Pym. Oh, thank Laud!
 You know when Laud once gets on Church affairs
 The case is desperate: he'll not be long
 To-day: He only means to prove, to-day,
 We English all are mad to have a hand
 In butchering the Scots for serving God
 After their fathers' fashion: only that.

Went. Sir, keep your jests for those who relish them!
(Aside.) Does he enjoy their confidence? (To P.) 'Tis kind
 To tell me what the Council does.

Pym. You grudge
 That I should know it had resolved on war
 Before you came? no need—you shall have all
 The credit, trust me.

Went. Have, they, Pym . . . not dared—
 They have not dared . . . that is—I know you not—
 Farewell—the times are changed.

Pym. —Since we two met
 At Greenwich? Yes—poor patriots though we be,
 You shall see something here, some slight return
 For your exploits in Ireland! Changed indeed,
 Could our friend Eliot look from out his grave!
 Ah, Wentworth, one thing for acquaintance-sake;
 Just to decide a question; have you, now,
 Really felt well since you forsook us?

Went. Pym—
 You're insolent

Pym. Oh, you misapprehend!
 Don't think I mean the advantage is with me:

I was about to say that, for my part,
 I've never quite held up my head since then,—
 Been quite myself since then : for first, you see,
 I lost all credit after that event
 With those who recollect how sure I was
 Wentworth would outdo Eliot on our side.

Went. By Heaven . . .

Pym. Forgive me : Savile, Vane, and Holland
 Eschew plain-speaking : 'tis a trick I have.

Went. How, when, where,—Savile, Vane and Holland
 speak,—

Plainly or otherwise,—would have my scorn,
 My perfect scorn, Sir . . .

Pym. . . . Did not my poor thoughts
 Claim somewhat ?

Went. Keep your thoughts ! believe the King
 Mistrusts me for their speaking, all these Vanes
 And Saviles ! make your mind up, all of you,
 That I am discontented with the King !

Pym. Why, you may be—I should be, that I know,
 Were I like you.

Went. Like me ?

Pym. I care not much
 For titles : our friend Eliot died no Lord,
 Hampden's no Lord, and Savile is a Lord :
 But you care, since you sold your soul for one.
 I can't think, therefore, Charles did well to laugh
 When you twice prayed so humbly for an Earldom.

Went. Pym . . .

Pym. And your letters were the movingest !
 Console yourself : I've borne him prayers just now
 From Scotland not to be opprest by Laud—
 And moving in their way : he'll pay, be sure,
 As much attention as to those you sent.

Went. False ! a lie, Sir !

. . . Who told you, Pym ?

The King did very well . . . nay, I was glad *
 When it was shown me why ;—I first refused it !

. . . Pym, you were once my friend-- don't speak to me !

Pym. Oh, Wentworth, ancient brother of my soul,
 That all should come to this !

Went.

Leave me !

Pym. My friend,
 Why should I leave you ?

Went.

To tell Rudyard this,

And Hampden this ! . . .

Pym.

Whose faces once were bright

At my approach . . . now sad with doubt and fear,
 Because I hope in you—Wentworth—in you
 Who never mean to ruin England—you
 Who shake, with God's great help, this frightful dream
 Away, now, in this Palace, where it crept
 Upon you first, and are yourself—your good
 And noble self—our Leader—our dear Chief—
 Hampden's own friend—

This is the proudest day !

Come Wentworth ! Do not even see the King !
 The rough old room will seem itself again !
 We'll both go in together—you've not seen
 Hampden so long—come—and there's Vane—I know
 You'll love young Vane ! This is the proudest day !

(The KING enters. WENTWORTH lets fall Pym's hand.)

Cha. Arrived, my Lord ?—This gentleman, we know,
 Was your old friend :

(To Pym) The Scots shall be informed
 What we determine for their happiness. [Exit Pym.
 You have made haste, my Lord.

Went. Sire . . . I am come . . .

Cha. To aid us with your counsel : this Scots' League
 And Covenant spreads too far, and we have proofs
 That they intrigue with France : the Faction, too . . .

Went. (Kneels.) Sire, trust me ! but for this once, trust me,
 Sire !

Cha. What can you mean ?

Went. That you should trust me ! now !
 Oh—not for my sake ! but 'tis sad, so sad
 That for distrusting me, you suffer—you
 Whom I would die to serve : Sire, do you think
 That I would die to serve you ?

Cha. But rise, Wentworth .

Went. What shall convince you ? What does Savile do
 To . . . Ah, one can't tear out one's heart—one's heart —
 And show it, how sincere a thing it is !

Cha. Have I not trusted you ?

Went. Say aught but that !
 It is my comfort, mark you : all will be
 So different when you trust me . . . as you shall !
 It has not been your fault,—I was away,
 Malignéd—away—and how were you to know ?
 I am here, now—you mean to trust me, now—
 All will go on so well !

Cha. Be sure I will—
 I've heard that I should trust you : as you came

Even Carlisle was telling me . . .

Went. No,—hear nothing—
Be told nothing about me ! you're not told
Your right-hand serves you, or your children love you !

Cha. You love me . . . only rise !

Went. I can speak now.
I have no right to hide the truth. 'Tis I
Can save you ; only I. Sire, what is done ?

Cha. Since Laud's assured . . . the minutes are within . . .
Loath as I am to spill my subjects' blood . . .

Went. That is, he'll have a war : what's done is done !

Cha. They have intrigued with France ; that's clear to Laud.

Went. Has Laud suggested any way to meet
The war's expence ?

Cha. He'd not decide on that
Until you joined us.

Went. Most considerate i
You're certain they intrigue with France, these Scots ?

(*Aside.*) The People would be with us !

Cha. Very sure.
Went. (The People for us . . . were the People for us !)
Sire, a great thought comes to reward your trust !

Summon a Parliament ! in Ireland first,
And then in England.

Cha. Madness !
Went. (*Aside.*) That puts off
The war—gives time to learn their grievances—
To talk with Pym—(*To CHARLES.*) I know the faction, as
They style it, . . .

Cha. . . . Tutors Scotland !

Went. All their plans
Suppose no Parliament : in calling one
You take them by surprise. Produce the proofs
Of Scotland's treason ; bid them help you, then !
Even Pym will not refuse !

Cha. You would begin
With Ireland ?

Went. Take no care for that : that's sure
To prosper.

Cha. You shall rule me : you were best
Return at once : but take this ere you go ! (*Giving a paper.*)
Now, do I trust you ? You're an Earl : my Friend
Of Friends : yes, Strafford while . . . You hear me not !

Went. Say it all o'er again—but once again—
The first was for the music—once again !

Cha. Strafford, my brave friend, there were wild reports—
Vain rumours . . . Henceforth touching Strafford is
To touch the apple of my sight : why gaze

So earnestly ?

Went. I am grown young again,
And foolish ! . . . what was it we spoke of ?

Cha. Ireland
The Parliament,—

Went. I may go when I will ?
—Now ?

Cha. Are you tired so soon of me ?
Went. My King . . .

But you will not so very much dislike
A Parliament ? I'd serve you any way !

Cha. You said just now this was the only way.
Went. Sire, I will serve you !

Cha. Strafford, spare yourself
You are so sick, they tell me, . . .

Went. 'Tis my soul
That's well and happy, now !

This Parliament—
We'll summon it, the English one—I'll care
For everything : You shall not need them much !

Cha. If they prove restive . . .
Went. I shall be with you !

Cha. Ere they assemble ?
Went. I will come, or else

Deposit this infirm humanity
I' the dust ! My whole heart stays with you, my King !

(As STRAFFORD goes out, the QUEEN enters.)

Cha. That man must love me !

Queen. Is it over then ?
Why he looks yellower than ever ! well,
At least we shall not hear eternally
Of his vast services : he's paid at last.

Cha. Not done with : he engages to surpass
All yet performed in Ireland.

Queen. I had thought
Nothing beyond was ever to be done.

The War, Charles—will he raise supplies enough ?

Cha. We've hit on an expedient ; he . . . that is,
I have advised . . . we have decided on
The calling—in Ireland—of a Parliament.

Queen. O truly ! You agree to that ? Is this
The first fruit of his counsel ? But I guessed
As much.

Cha. This is too idle, Henrietta !
I should know best : He will strain every nerve,
And once a precedent established . . .

Queen. Notice
 How sure he is of a long term of favours!
 He'll see the next, and the next after that;
 No end to Parliaments!

Cha. Well, it is done:
 He talks it smoothly, doubtless: if, indeed,
 The Commons here . . .

Queen. Here! you will summon them
 Here? Would I were in France again to see
 A King!

Cha. But, Henrietta . . .

Queen. O the Scots
 Do well to spurn your rule!

Cha. But, listen, Sweet . . .
Queen. Let Strafford listen—you confide in him!

Cha. I do not, Love—I do not so confide . . .
 The Parliament shall never trouble us.

. . . Nay, hear me! I have schemes—such schemes—we'll
 buy

The leaders off: without that, Strafford's counsel
 Had ne'er prevailed on me. Perhaps I call it
 To have excuse for breaking it—for ever—
 And whose will then the blame be? See you not?
 Come, Dearest!—look! the little fairy, now,
 That cannot reach my shoulder! Dearest, come!

[*Excunt.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—(As in Act I. Scene 1.,

The same Party enters confusedly; among the first, the younger VANE and RUDYARD.

Rud. Twelve subsidies!

Vane. O Rudyard, do not laugh
At least!

Rud. True: Strafford called the Parliament—
'Tis he should laugh!

A Puritan (*entering*).—Out of the serpent's root
Comes forth a cockatrice.

Fien. (*entering*). —A stinging one,
If that's the Parliament: twelve subsidies!
A stinging one! but, brother, where's your word
For Strafford's other nest-egg—the Scots' War?

The Puritan. His fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.

Fien. Shall be? It chips the shell, man; peeps abroad:
Twelve subsidies!—

Why, how now, Vane?

Rud. Hush, Fiennes!

Fien. Ah? . . . but he was not more a dupe than I,
Or you, or any here the day that Pym
Returned with the good news. Look up, dear Vane!
We all believed that Strafford meant us well
In summoning the Parliament . . .

(HAMPDEN enters.)

Vane (*starting up*). Now, Hampden,
Clear me! I would have leave to sleep again!
I'd look the People in the face again!
Clear me from having, from the first, hoped, dreamed
Better of Strafford! Fool!

Hamp. You'll grow one day
A steadfast light to England, Vane!

Rud. Ay, Fiennes,
Strafford revived our Parliaments: before,
War was but talked of; there's an army, now:
Still, we've a Parliament. Poor Ireland bears
Another wrench (she dies the hardest death!)

Why . . . speak of it in Parliament ! and, lo,
'Tis spoken !—and console yourselves.

Fien. The jest!

We clamoured, I suppose, thus long, to win
The privilege of laying on ourselves
A soror burthen than the King dares lay !

Rud. Mark now: we meet at length: complaints pour in
From every county: all the land cries out
On loans and levies, curses Ship-money,
Calls vengeance on the Star-chamber: we lend
An ear: "ay, lend them all the ears you have,"
Puts in the King; "my subjects, as you find,
"Are fretful, and conceive great things of you:
"Just listen to them, friends: you'll sanction me
"The measures they most wince at, make them yours
"Instead of mine, I know: and, to begin,
"They say my levies pinch them,—raise me straight
"Twelve subsidies!"

Ficn. and others. All England cannot furnish
Twelve subsidies !

Hol. But Strafford, just returned
From Ireland . . . what has he to do with that ?
How could he speak his mind ? He left before
The Parliament assembled : Rudyard, friends,
He could not speak his mind ! and Pym, who knows
Strafford . . .

Rud. Would I were sure we know ourselves!
What is for good, what bad—who friend, who foe!

Hol. Do you count Parliaments no gain?

Rud. While the King's creatures overbalance us ?
—There's going on, beside, among ourselves
A quiet, slow, but most effectual course
Of buying over, sapping, . . .

A Puritan. . . . Leavening
The lump till all is leaven.

A Voice. Glanville's gone.

Rud. I'll put a case ; had not the Court declared
That no sum short of just twelve subsidies
Will be accepted by the King—our House
Would have consented to that wretched offer
To let us buy off Ship-money ?

Hol. Most like,
If . . . say six subsidies, will buy it off,
The House . . .

Rud. . . . Will grant them! Hampden, do you
hear?
Oh, I congratulate you that the King

Has gained his point at last . . . our own assent
 To that detested tax ! all's over then !
 There's no more taking refuge in this room
 And saying, " Let the King do what he will,
 " We, England, are no party to our shame,—
 " Our day will come !" Congratulate with me !

(*Pym enters.*)

Vane. Pym, Strafford called this Parliament, 'tis like—
 But we'll not have our Parliaments like those
 In Ireland, Pym !

Rud. Let him stand forth, that Strafferd !
 One doubtful act hides far too many sins ;
 It can be stretched no more—and, to my mind,
 Begins to drop from those it covers.

Other Voices. Pym,
 Let him avow himself ! No fitter time !
 We wait thus long for you !

Rud. Perhaps, too long !
 Since nothing but the madness of the Court
 In thus unmasking its designs at once
 Had saved us from betraying England. Stay—
 This Parliament is Strafford's : let us vote
 Our list of grievances too black by far
 To suffer talk of subsidies : or best—
 That Ship-money's disposed of long ago
 By England ; any vote that's broad enough :
 And then let Strafford, for the love of it,
 Support his Parliament !

Vane. And vote as well
 No war's to be with Scotland ! Hear you, Pym ?
 We'll vote, no War ! No part nor lot in it
 For England !

Many Voices. Vote, no War ! Stop the new levies !
 No Bishop's War ! At once ! When next we meet !

Pym. Much more when next we meet !

— Friends, which of you
 Since first the course of Strafford was in doubt
 Has fallen the most away in soul from me ?

Vane. I sate apart, even now, under God's eye,
 Pondering the words that should denounce you, Pym,
 In presence of us all, as one at league
 With England's enemy !

Pym. You are a good
 And gallant spirit, Henry ! Take my hand
 And say you pardon me for all the pain
 Till now ! Strafferd is wholly ours.

Many Voices.

'Tis sure ?

Pym. Most sure—for Charles dissolves the Parliament
While I speak here! . . .

(*Great emotion in the assembly.*)

. . . And I must speak, friends, now !

Strafford is ours ! The King detects the change,
Casts Strafford off for ever, and resumes
His ancient path: no Parliament for us—
No Strafford for the King !

Come all of you

To bid the King farewell, predict success
To his Scots' expedition, and receive
Strafford, our comrade now ! The next will be
Indeed a Parliament !

Vane. Forgive me, Pym !

Voices. This looks like truth—Strafford can have, indeed,
No choice !

Pym. Friends, follow me ! he's with the King :
Come Hampden, and come Rudyard, and come Vane—
This is no sullen day for England, Vane !
Strafford shall tell you !

Voices. To Whitehall then ! Come !

[*Exeunt omnes.*

SCENE II.—Whitehall.

CHARLES seated, STRAFFORD standing beside a table covered
with maps, etc.

Cha. Strafford . . .

Straf. Is it a dream ? my papers, here—
Thus—as I left them—all the plans you found
So happy—look ! The track you pressed my hand
For pointing out !)—and in this very room
Over these very plans, you tell me, Sire,
With the same face, too—tell me just one thing
That ruins them ! How's this ? what may this mean ?
Sire, who has done this ?

Cha. Strafford, none but I !
You bade me put the rest away—indeed
You are alone !

Straf. Alone—and like to be !
No fear, when some unworthy scheme's grown ripe,

Of those who hatched it leaving you to loose
 The mischief on the world ! Laud hatches war,
 Falls to his prayers, and leaves the rest to me—
 And I'm alone !

Cha. At least, you knew as much
 When first you undertook the war.

Straf. My liege,
 Is this the way ? I said, since Laud would lap
 A little blood, 'twere best to hurry o'er
 The loathsome business—not to be whole months
 At slaughter—one blow—only one—then, peace—
 Save for the dreams ! I said, to please you both
 I'd lead an Irish Army to the West,
 While in the South the English . . . but you look
 As though you had not told me fifty times
 'Twas a brave plan ! My Army is all raised—
 I am prepared to join it . . .

Cha. Hear me, Strafford !

Straf. . . . When, for some little thing, my whole design
 Is set aside—(where is the wretched paper?)
 I am to lead—(ay, here it is)—to lead
 This English Army : why ? Northumberland
 That I appointed, chooses to be sick—
 Is frightened : and, meanwhile, who answers for
 The Irish Parliament ? or Army, either ?
 Is this my plan ? I say, is this my plan ?

Cha. You are disrespectful, Sir !

Straf. Do not believe—
 My liege, do not believe it ! I am yours—
 Yours ever—'tis too late to think about—
 To the death, yours ! Elsewhere, this untoward step
 Shall pass for mine—the world shall think it mine—
 But, here ! But, here ! I am so seldom here !
 Seldom with you, my King ! I—soon to rush
 Alone—upon a Giant—in the dark !

Cha. My Strafford !

Straf. (*Sees himself at the table ; examines papers awhile ; then, breaking off*)
 * . . . “ Seize the passes of the Tyne ” . . .
 But don't you see—see all I say is true ?
 My plan was sure to prosper,—so, no cause
 To ask the Parliament for help ; whereas
 We need them—frightfully . . .

Cha. Need this Parliament ?

Straf. —Now, for God's sake, mind—not one error more !
 We can afford no error—we draw, now,
 Upon our last resource—this Parliament
 Must help us !

Cha. I've undone you, Strafford !

Straf.

Nay—

Nay—don't despond—Sire—'tis not come to that !

I have not hurt you ? Sire—what have I said

To hurt you ? I'll unsay it ! Don't despond !

Sire, do you turn from me ?

Cha.

My friend of friends !

Straf. (After a pause.) We'll make a shift ! Leave me the Parliament !

They help us ne'er so little but I'll make

A vast deal out of it. We'll speak them fair :

They're sitting : that's one great thing : that half gives

Their sanction to us : that's much : don't despond !

Why, let them keep their money, at the worst !

The reputation of the People's help

Is all we want : we'll make shift yet !

Cha.

Dear Strafford !

Straf. But meantime, let the sum be ne'er so small

They offer, we'll accept it : any sum--

For the look of it : the least grant tells the Scots

The Parliament is ours . . . their staunch ally

Is ours : that told, there's scarce a blow to strike !

What will the grant be ? What does Glanville think ?

Cha. Alas . . .

Straf. My liege ?

Cha.

Strafford . . .

Straf.

But answer me !

Have they . . . O surely not refused us all ?

All the twelve subsidies ? We never looked

For all of them ! How many do they give ?

Cha. You have not heard . . .

Straf. (What has he done ?)—Heard what ?
But speak at once, Sire—this grows terrible !

(*The King continuing silent.*)

You have dissolved them !—I'll not leave this man.

Cha. 'Twas Vane—his ill-judged vehemence that . . .

Straf.

Vane ?

Cha. He told them, as they were about to vote

The half, that nothing short of all the twelve

Would serve our turn, or be accepted.

Straf.

Vane !

Vane ! and you promised me that very Vane . . .

O God, to have it gone, quite gone from me

The one last hope—I that despair, *my* hope—

That I should reach his heart one day, and cure

All bitterness one day, be proud again

And young again, care for the sunshine too,

And never think of Eliot any more,—
 God, and to toil for this, go far for this,
 Get nearer, and still nearer, reach this heart—
 And find Vane there !

(Suddenly taking up a paper and continuing with a forced calmness)

Northumberland is sick :

Well then, I take the Army : Wilmot leads
 The Horse, and he with Conway must secure
 The passes of the Tyne : Ormond supplies
 My place in Ireland. Here, we'll try the City :
 If they refuse a loan . . . debase the coin
 And seize the bullion ! we've no other choice.
 Herbert . . .

(Flinging down the paper.) And this while I am here ! with
 you !

And there are hosts such, hosts like Vane ! I go,—
 And, I once gone, they'll close around you, Sire,
 When the least pique, pettiest mistrust, is sure
 To ruin me—and you along with me !
 Do you see that ? And you along with me !
 —Sire, you'll not ever listen to these men,
 And I away, fighting your battle ? Sire,
 If they—if She—charge me—no matter what—
 You say, “At any time when he returns
 “His head is mine.” Don't stop me there ! You know
 My head is yours . . . only, don't stop me there !

Cha. Too shameful, Strafford ! You advised the war,
 And . . .

Straf. I ! I ! that was never spoken with
 Till it was entered on ! That loathe the war !
 That say it is the maddest, wickedest . . .
 Do you know, Charles, I think, within my heart,
 That you would say I did advise the war ;
 And if, thro' your own weakness, falsehood, Charles,
 These Scots, with God to help them, drive me back .
 You will not step between the raging People
 And me, to say . . .

I knew you ! from the first
 I knew you ! Never was so cold a heart !
 Remember that I said it—that I never
 Believed you for a moment !

—And, you loved me ?
 You thought your perfidy profoundly hid
 Because I could not share your whisperings
 With Vane ? With Savile ? But your hideous heart—
 I had your heart to see, Charles ! Oh, to have

A heart of stone—of smooth, cold, frightful stone !
 Ay, call them ! Shall I call for you ? The Scots
 Goaded to madness ? Or the English—Pym—
 Shall I call Pym, your subject ? Oh, you think
 I'll leave them in the dark about it all ?
 They shall not know you ? Hampden, Pym shall not . . .

(Enter PYM, HAMPDEN, VANE, etc.)

(Dropping on his knee.) Thus favoured with your gracious countenance

What shall a rebel League avail against
 Your servant, utterly and ever yours ?
 (To the rest) So, Gentlemen, the King's not even left
 The privilege of bidding me farewell
 Who haste to save the People—that you style
 Your People—from the mercies of the Scots
 And France their friend ?

(To CHARLES) Pym's grave grey eyes are fixed
 Upon you, Sire !

(To the rest) Your pleasure, Gentlemen ?
 Hamp. The King dissolved us—'tis the King we seek
 And not Lord Strafford.

Straf. . . . Strafford, guilty too
 Of counsellng the measure : (To CHARLES) (Hush . . . you
 know . . .

You have forgotten . . . Sire, I counselled it !)

— (Aloud) A heinous matter, truly ! But the King
 Will yet see cause to thank me for a course
 Which now, perchance . . . (Sire, tell them so !) . . . he
 blames.

Well, choose some fitter time to make your charge—
 I shall be with the Scots—you understand ?—
 Then yelp at me !

Meanwhile, your Majesty
 Binds me, by this fresh token of your trust . . .

(Under the pretence of an earnest farewell, STRAFFORD conducts CHARLES to the door, in such a manner as to hide his agitation from the rest : VANE and others gazing at them : as the King disappears, they turn as by one impulse to PYM, who has not changed his original posture of surprise.)

Hamp. Leave we this arrogant strong wicked man !

Vane, and others. Dear Pym ! Come out of this unworthy place
 To our old room again ! Come, dearest Pym !

(STRAFFORD, just about to follow the King, looks back.)

Pym. (To STRAFFORD) Keep tryst! the old appointment's made anew:

Forget not we shall meet again!

Straf. Be it so!

And if an Army follows me ?'

Vane. His friends

Will entertain your Army!

Pym. I'll not say

You have misreckoned, Strafford: time will . . .

Perish

Body and spirit ! Fool to feign a doubt—

Pretend the scrupulous and nice reserve

Of one whose prowess is to do thefeat !

What share have I in it ? Shall I affect

To see no dismal sign above your head

When God suspends his ruinous thunder there ?

Strafford is doomed !—Touch him no one of you !

[*Exeunt PYM, HAMPDEN, etc.*

Straf. Pym, we shall meet again !

(Enter CARLISLE.)

You here, girl ?
Hush—

Car. I know it all—hush, dearest Strafford !

Straf. Ah ?

Well. I shall make a sorry soldier, Lucy !

All Knights begin their enterprise, you know,

Under the best of auspices ; 'tis morn—

The Lady girds his sword upon the Youth—

(He's always very young)—the trumpets sound—

Cups pledge him, and . . . and . . . the King blesses him—

You need not turn a page of the Romance

To learn the Dreadful Giant's fate ! Indeed

We've the fair Lady here ; but she apart—

A poor mat, never having handled lance,

And rather old, weary, and far from sure

His Squires are not the Giant's friends : well—well—

Let us go forth !

Car. Go forth ?

Straf. What matters it ?

We shall die gloriously—as the book says.

Car. To Scotland ? not to Scotland ?

Straf. Am I sick

Like your good brother, brave Northumberland ?

Beside the walls seem falling on me !

Car. Strafford,
 The wind that saps these walls can undermine
 Your camp in Scotland too ! Whence creeps the wind ?
 Have you no eyes except for Pym ? Look here !
 A breed of silken creatures lurk and thrive
 In your contempt ; you'll vanquish Pym ? Friend, Vane
 Can vanquish you ! And Vane you think to fly ?—
 Rush on the Scots ! Do nobly ! Vane's slight sneer
 Shall test success—adjust the praise—suggest
 The faint result : Vane's sneer shall reach you thereto !
 —You do not listen !

Straf. Oh . . . I give that up—
 There's fate in it—I give all here quite up.
 Care not what Vane does or what Holland does
 Against me ! 'Tis so idle to withstand them—
 In no case tell me what they do !

Car. But Strafford . . .
Straf. I want a little strife beside—real strife :
 This petty, palace-warfare does me harm :
 I shall feel better, fairly out of it.

Car. Why do you smile ?

Straf. I got to fear them, girl !
 I could have torn his throat at first, that Vane,
 As he leered at me on his stealthy way
 To the Queen's closet, Lucy—but of late
 I often found it in my heart to say
 "Vane, don't traduce me to her !"

Car. But the King . . .
Straf. The King stood there, 'tis not so long ago,
 —There, and the whisper, Lucy, "Be my friend
 "Of friends !"—My King ! I would have . . .

Car. . . . Died for him ?
Straf. . . . Sworn him true, Lucy : I will die for him.
Car. (Aside.) What can he mean ? You'd say he loved him
 still !
 (To STRAFFORD.) But go not, Strafford ! . . . But you must
 renounce

This project on the Scots ! Die ! wherefore die ?
 Charles never loved you !

Straf. And he will not now :
 He's not of those who care the more for you
 That you're unfortunate.

Car. Then wherefore die
 For such a master ?

Straf. You that told me first
 How good he was—when I must leave true friends
 To find a truer friend !—that drew me here
 From Ireland.—"I had but to show myself

" And Charles would spurn Vane, Savile, and the rest—" You, girl, to ask me that ?

Car. (Aside.) If he have set His heart abidingly on Charles !

(To STRAFFORD.) Dear friend I shall not see you any more !

Straf. Yes, girl— There's one man here that I shall meet !

Car. (Aside.) The King !— What way to save him from the King ?

My soul . . . That lent from its own store the charmed disguise That clothes the King . . . he shall behold my soul !

(To STRAFFORD.) Strafford . . . (I shall speak best if you'll not gaze

Upon me.) . . . You would perish, too ! So sure ! . . . Could you but know what 'tis to bear, my Strafford, One Image stamped within you, turning blank The else imperial brilliance of your mind,— A weakness, but most precious,—like a flaw I' the diamond which should shape forth some sweet face Yet to create, and meanwhile treasured there Lest Nature lose her gracious thought for ever ! . . .

Straf. When could it be ? . . . no ! . . . yet . . . was it the day

We waited in the anteroom, till Holland Should leave the presence-chamber ?

Car. What ? *Straf.* —That I Described to you my love for Charles ?

Car. (Aside.) Ah ! no— One must not lure him from a love like that ! Oh, let him love the King and die ! 'Tis past . . . I shall not serve him worse for that one brief And passionate hope . . . silent for ever now !

(To STRAFFORD.) And you are really bound for Scotland, then ? I wish you well : you must be very sure Of the King's faith, for Pym and all his crew Will not be idle—setting Vane aside !

Straf. If Pym is busy,—you may write of Pym. *Car.* What need when there's your King to take your part ?

He may endure Vane's counsel ; but for Pym— Think you he'll suffer Pym to . . .

Straf. Girl, your hair Is glossier than the Queen's !

Car. Is that to ask A curl of me ?

Straf. Scotland—the weary way !

Car. Stay, let me fasten it.

—A rival's, Strafford?

Straf. (*Showing the George.*) He hung it there: twine yours around it, girl!

Car. No—no—another time—I trifle so!

And there's a masque on foot: farewell: the Court
Is dull: do something to enliven us
In Scotland; we expect it at your hands.

Straf. I shall not fall in Scotland.

Car. Prosper—if
You'll think of me sometimes!

Straf. How think of him
And not of you? of you—the lingering streak
(A golden one) in my good fortune's eve?

Car. Strafford . . . Well, when the eve has its last streak
The night has its first star! [Exit.]

Straf. That voice of hers . . .
You'd think she had a heart sometimes! His voice
Is soft too.

Only God can save him now.
Be Thou about his bed, about his path! . . .
His path! Where's England's path? Diverging wide,
And not to join again the track my foot
Must follow—whither? All that forlorn way—
Among the tombs! Far—far—till . . . What, they do
Then join again, these paths? For, huge in the dusk,
There's—Pym to face!

Why then I have a Foe
To close with, and a fight to fight at last
That's worth my soul! What—do they beard the King—
And shall the King want Strafford at his need—
My King—at his great need? Am I not here?

. . . Not in the common blessed market-place
Pressed on by the rough artisans, so proud
To catch a glance from Wentworth! They'll lie down
Hungry and say “Why, it must end some day—
“Is he not watching for our sake?”

—Not there!
But in Whitehall—the whitened sepulchre—
The . . .

(At the Window, and looking on London.)

Curse nothing to-night! Only one name
They'll curse in all those streets to-night! Whose fault?
Did I make kings—set up, the first, a man
To represent the multitude, receive
All love in right of them—supplanting them

Until you love the man and not the King—
The man with the mild voice and mournful eyes
That send me forth . . .

To breast the bloody sea
That sweeps before me—with one star to guide—
Night has its first supreme forsaken star !

[Exit]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Opposite Westminster Hall.*

Sir HENRY VANE, Lord SAVILE, Lord HOLLAND, and others of
the Court.

Vane. The Commons thrust you out ?

Savile. And what kept you

From sharing their civility ?

Vane. Kept me ?

Fresh news from Scotland, Sir ! worse than the last
If that may be ! all's up with Strafford there !

Nothing's to bar the mad Scots marching hither
The next fine morning ! That detained me, Sir !
Well now, before they thrust you out, go on,
Their speaker . . . did the fellow Lenthall say
All we set down for him ?

Hol. Not a word missed !

Ere he began, we entered, Savile, I
And Bristol and some more, in hopes to breed
A wholesome awe in the new Parliament—
But such a gang of graceless ruffians, Vane !

They glared at us . . .

Vane. So many ?

Savile. Not a bench

Without its complement of burley knaves—
Your son, there, Vane, among them—Hampden leant
Upon his shoulder—think of that !

Vane. I'd think
On Lenthall's speech, if I could get at it . . .
He said, I hope, how grateful they should be
For this unlooked-for summons from the King ?

Hol. Just as we drilled him . . .

Vane. That the Scots will march
On London ?

Hol. All, and made so much of it
A dozen subsidies at least seemed sure
To follow, when . . .

Vane. Well ?

Hol. 'Tis a strange thing now !
I've a vague memory of a sort of sound—
A voice—a kind of vast, unnatural voice—
Pym, Sir, was speaking ! Savile, help me out,—
What was it all ?

Sav. Something about "a matter" . . .
No . . . "a work for England."

Bristol. "England's great revenge"
He talked of.

Sav. How should I be used to Pym
More than yourselves ?

Hol. However that may be,
'Twas something with which we had nought to do,
For we were "strangers" and 'twas "England's work"—
(All this while looking us straight in the face)
In other words, our presence might be spared :
So, in the twinkling of an eye, before
I settled to my mind what ugly brute
Was liklest Pym just 'then, they yelled us out,
Locked the doors after us, and here are we !

Vane. Old Eliot's method . . .

Sav. Ah, now, Vane, a truce
To Eliot and his times, and the great Duke,
And how to manage Parliaments ! 'Twas you
Advised the Queen to summon this—why Strafford
To do him justice, would not hear of it !

Vane. Say, rather, you have done the best of turns
To Strafford—he's at York—we all know why !
I would you had not set the Scots on Strafford
Till he had put down Pym for us, my lord !

Sav. I ? did I alter Strafford's plans ? did I . . .

(Enter a Messenger.)

Mes. The Queen, my lords . . . she sends me . . . follow me
At once . . . 'tis very urgent . . . she would have
Your counsel . . . something perilous and strange
Occasions her command.

Sav. We follow, friend !
Now Vane . . . your Parliament will plague us all !

Vane. No Strafford here beside !

Sav. If you dare hint
I had a hand in his betrayal, Sir . . .

Hol. Nay find a fitter time for quarrels—Pym
Will overmatch the best of you ; and, think,
The Queen !

Vane. Come on then (*as they go out*) . . . understand, I
loathe
Strafford as much as any—but he serves
So well to keep off Pym—to screen us all !
I would we had reserved him yet awhile !

[*Excunt.*

SCENE II.—Whitchall.

The QUEEN and CARLIS E.

Queen. It cannot be !

Car. It is so.

Queen. Why the House
Have hardly met !

Car. They met for that.

Queen. No—no—
Meet to impeach Lord Strafford ! 'Tis a jest !

Car. A bitter one.

Queen. Consider ! 'Tis the House
We summoned so reluctantly—which nothing
But the disastrous issue of the war
Persuaded us to summon ; they'll wreak all
Their spite on us, no doubt ; but the old way
Is to begin by talk of grievances !
They have their grievances to busy them !

Car. Pym has begun his speech.

Queen. Where's Vane ? . . . That is
Pym will impeach Lord Strafford if he leaves
His Presidency—he's at York, you know,
Since the Scots beat him—why should he leave York ?

Car. Because the King sends for him.

Queen. Ah . . . but if
The King did send for him, he let him know
We had been forced to call a Parliament—

A step which Strafford, now I come to think,
Was vehement against . . .

Car. The policy
Escaped him of first striking Parliament's
To earth, then setting them upon their feet
And giving them a sword: but this is idle!
—Did the King send for Strafford?

He will come.

Queen. And what am I to do?

Car. What do? Fail, Madam!
Be ruined for his sake! what matters how
So it but stand on record that you made
An effort—only one?

Queen. The King's away
At Theobald's.

Car. Send for him at once—he must
Dissolve the House.

Queen. Wait till Vane finds the truth
Of the report—then . . .

Car. . . . it will matter little
What the King does. Strafford that serves you all—
That's fighting for you now!

(Enter Sir H. VANE.)

Vane. The Commons, Madam,
Are sitting with closed doors—a huge debate—
No lack of noise—but nothing, I should guess,
Concerning Strafford: Pym has certainly
Not spoken yet.

Queen. (To CARLISLE.) You hear?
Car. I do not hear

That the King's sent for!

Vane. Savile will be able
To tell you more.

(Enter HOLLAND.)

Queen. The last news, Holland?
Hol. Pym
Is raging like a fiend! The whole House means
To follow him together to Whitehall
And force the King to give up Strafford.

Queen. Strafford?
Hol. If they content themselves with Strafford! Laud
Is talked of, Cottington and Windebank too,
Pym has not left out one of them . . . I would
You heard Pym raving!

Queen. Vane, find out the King!

Tell the King, Vane, the People follow Pym
To brave us at Whitehall !

(Enter SAVILE.)

Sav. Not to Whitehall—
'Tis to the Lords they go—they'll seek redress
On Strafford from his peers—the legal way,
They call it . . .

Queen. (Wait, Vane !)

Sav. . . . But the adage gives
Long life to threatened men ! Strafford can save
Himself so readily : at York, remember
In his own county, what has he to fear ?
The Commons only mean to frighten him
From leaving York.

Queen. Surely he will not come !
Carlisle, he will not come !

Car. Once more, the King
Has sent for Strafford—He will come.

Vane. O doubtless ;
And bring destruction with him ; that's his way.
What but his coming spoilt all Conway's plan ?
The King must take his counsel, choose his friends,
Be wholly ruled by him ! What's the result ?
The North that was to rise—Ireland to help—
What came of it ? In my poor mind a fright
Is no prodigious punishment.

Car. A fright ?
Pym will fail worse than Strafford if he thinks
To frighten him. (To the QUEEN.) You will not save him,
then ?

Sav. When something like a charge is made, the King
Will best know how to save him : and 'tis clear
That, while he suffers nothing by the matter,
The King will reap advantage : this in question,
No dinning you with ship-money complaints !

Queen. (To CARLISLE.) If we dissolve them, who will pay the
• army ?

Protect us from the insolent Scots ?

Car. In truth
I know not, Madam : Strafford's fate concerns
Me little : you desired to learn what course
Would save him: I obey you.

Vane. Notice, too,
There can't be fairer ground for taking full
Revenge—(Strafford's revengeful)—than he'll have
Against this very Pym.

Queen. Why, he shall claim
Vengeance on Pym!

Vane. And Strafford, who is he
To 'scape unscathed amid the accidents
That harass all beside? I, for my part,
Should look for something of discomfiture
Had the King trusted me so thoroughly
And been so paid for it.

Hol. He'll keep at York:
All will blow over: he'll return no worse—
Humbled a little—thankful for a place
Under as good a man—Oh, we'll dispense
With seeing Strafford for a month or two!

(Enter STRAFFORD.)

Queen. You here!

Straf. The King sends for me, Madam.

Queen. Sir . . .
The King . . .

Straf. An urgent matter that imports the King . . .
(To CARLISLE.) Why, Lucy, what's in agitation now
That all this muttering and shrugging, see,
Begins at me? They do not speak!

Car. Oh welcome!
. . . And we are proud of you . . . all very proud
To have you with us, Strafford . . . you were brave
At Durham . . . You did well there . . . Had you not
Been stayed you might have . . . we said, even now,
Our last, last hope's in you!

Vane. (To CARLISLE.) The Queen would speak
A word with you!

Straf. (To VANE.) Will one of you vouchsafe
To signify my presence to the King?

Sav. An urgent matter?

Straf. None that touches you,
Lord Savile! Say it were some treacherous,
Sly, pitiful intriguing with the Scots—
You would go free, at last! (Aside.) They half divine
My purpose! (To the QUEEN.) Madam, shall I see the King?
The service I would render much concerns
His welfare.

Queen. But his Majesty, my lord,
May not be here, may . . .

Straf. Its importance, then
Must plead excuse for this withdrawal, Madam—
And for the grief it gives Lord Savile here.

Queen. (*Who has been conversing with VANE and HOLLAND.*)
The King will see you, Sir.

(*To CARLISLE.*) Mark me: Pym's worst
Is done by now—he has impeached the Earl,
Or found the Earl too strong for him, by now;
Let us not seem instructed! We should work
No good to Strafford, but deform ourselves
With shame in the world's eye! (*To STRAFFORD.*) His Majesty
Has much to say you.

Straf. (*Aside.*) Time fleeting, too!

(*To CARLISLE.*) No means of getting them away, Carlisle?
What does she whisper? Does she know my purpose?
What does she think of it? Get them away!

Queen. (*To CARLISLE.*) He comes to baffle Pym—he thinks
the danger
Far off—tell him no word of it—a time
For help will come—we'll not be wanting, then!
Keep him in play, Carlisle—you, self-possessed
And calm! (*To STRAFFORD.*) To spare your Lordship some
delay
I will myself acquaint the King. (*To CARLISLE.*) Beware!

[*Excunt QUEEN, VANE, HOLLAND and SAVILE.*

Straf. She knows it?

Car. Tell me, Strafford . . .

Straf. Afterward!

The moment's the great moment of all time!

She knows my purpose?

Car. Thoroughly—just now
She bade me hide it from you.

Straf. Quick, dear girl . . .
The whole grand scheme?

Car. (*Aside.*) Ah, he would learn if they
Connive at Pym's procedure! Could they but
Have once apprised the King! But there's no time
For falsehood now. (*To STRAFFORD.*) Strafford, the whole
is known.

Straf. Known and approved?
Car. Hardly discountenanced.

Straf. And the King—say the King consents as well!
Car. The King's not yet informed, but will not dare

To interpose.

Straf. What need to wait him, then?
He'll sanction it! I stayed, girl tell him, long!
It vexed me to the soul—this waiting here—
You know him—there's no counting on the King!
Tell him I waited long!

Car. (Aside.) What can he mean ?
Rejoice at the King's hollowness ?

Straf. I knew
They would be glad—all over once,
I knew they would be glad . . . but he'd contrive,
The Queen and he, to mar, by helping it,
An angel's making !

Car. (Aside.) Is he mad ? (*To STRAFFORD.*) Dear Strafford,
You were not wont to look so happy.

Straf. Girl,
I tried obedience thoroughly : I took
The King's wild plan . . . of course, ere I could reach
My army—Conway ruined it : I drew
The wrecks together, raised all heaven and earth,
And would have fought the Scots—the King at once
Made truce with them : then, Lucy, then, dear girl,
God put it in my mind to love, serve, die
For Charles—but never to obey him more !
While he endured their insolence at Ripon
I fell on them at Durham.

. . . But you'll tell
The King I waited ? All the anteroom
Is filled with my adherents.

Car. Strafford—Strafford
What daring act is this you hint ?

Straf. No—no !
'Tis here—not daring if you knew !—all here !
(*Drawing papers from his breast.*)
Full proof—see—ample proof—does the Queen know
I have such damning proof ? Bedford and Essex,
Broke, Warwick, Savile (did you notice Savile ?
The simper that I spoilt ?) Say, Mandeville—
Sold to the Scots, body and soul, by Pym !

Car. Great heaven !

Straf. From Savile and his lords, to Pym —
I crush them, girl—Pym shall not ward the blow
Nor Savile crawl aside from it ! The Court
And the Cabal—I crush them !

Car. And you go . . .
Strafford,—and now you go ? . . .

Straf. About no work
In the background, I promise you ! I go
Straight to the House of Lords to claim these men.
Mainwaring !

Car. Stay—stay, Strafford !

Straf. She'll return—
The Queen—some little project of her own—
No time to lose—the King takes fright perhaps—

Car. Pym's strong, remember !

Straf. * Very strong—as fits
The Faction's Head . . . with no offence to Hampden,
Vane, Rudyard and my loving Hollis—one
And all they lodge within the Tower to-night
In just equality. Bryan ! Mainwaring !

(*Many of his Adherents enter.*)

The Peers debate just now (a lucky chance)
On the Scots war—my visit's opportune :
When all is over, Bryan, you'll proceed
To Ireland : these dispatches, mark me, Bryan,
Are for the Deputy, and these for Ormond—
We'll want the Army here—my Army, raised
At such a cost, that should have done such good,
And was inactive all the time ! no matter—
We'll find a use for it. Willis . . . no—You !
You, friend, make haste to York—bear this, at once . . .
Or,—better stay for form's sake—see yourself
The news you carry. You remain with me
To execute the Parliament's command,
Mainwaring—help to seize the lesser knaves :
Take care there's no escaping at back doors !
To not have one escape—mind me—not one !
I seem revengeful, Lucy ? Did you know
What these men dare !

Car. It is so much they dare !

Straf. I proved that long ago ; my turn is now !
Keep sharp watch, Goring, on the citizens ;
Observe who harbours any of the brood
That scramble off : be sure they smart for it !
Our coffers are but lean.

And you, girl, too,
Shall have your task—deliver this to Laud—
Laud will not be the slowest in my praise !
“Thorough” he'll say !

—Foolish, to be so glad !

This sort of life is vivid, after all !
‘Tis worth while, Lucy, having foes like mine
For the dear bliss of crushing them ! To-day
Is worth the living for !

Car. That reddening brow !
You seem . . .

Straf. Well—do I not ? I would be well—
I could not but be well on such a day !
And, this day ended, ‘tis of slight import
How long the ravaged frame subjects the soul
In Strafford !

Car. Noble Strafford !

Straf. No farewell !

I'll see you, girl, to-morrow—the first thing !

—If she should come to stay me !

Car. Go—'tis nothing—

Only my heart that swells—it has been thus

Ere now—go, Strafford !

Straf. To-night, then, let it be !

I must see Him . . . I'll see you after Him . . .

I'll tell you how Pym looked. Follow me, friends !

You, gentlemen, shall see a sight this hour

To talk of all your lives. Close after me !

" My friend of friends ! "

[*Excunt STRAFFORD, etc.*

Car. The King—ever the King !

No thought of one beside, whose little word

Unveils the King to him—one word from me—

Which yet I do not breathe !

Ah, have I spared

Strafford a pang, and shall I seek reward

Beyond that memory ? Surely, too, some way

He is the better for my love . . . No, no,

He would not look so joyous—I'll believe

His very eye would never sparkle thus,

Had I not prayed for him this long, long while !

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*The Antechamber of the House of Lords.*

*Many of the Presbyterian Party. The Adherents of
STRAFFORD, etc.*

A Group of Presbyterians.—1. I tell you he struck Maxwell

—Maxwell sought

To stay the Earl : he struck him and passed on.

2. Fear as you may, keep a good countenance
Before these ruffians !

3. Strafford here the first—

With the great army at his back !

4. No doubt !

I would Pym had made haste . . . that's Bryan, hush—
The fellow pointing.

STRAFFORD's Followers.—1. Mark these worthies, now !

2. A goodly gathering ! "Where the carcass is
There shall the eagles" . . . what's the rest ?

3. For eagles
Say crows.

A PRESBYTERIAN. Stand back, Sirs !

One of STRAFFORD'S Followers. Are we in Geneva ?

A PRESBYTERIAN. No—nor in Ireland, we have leave to
breathe.

One of STRAFFORD'S Followers. Really ? Behold how grand
a thing it is

To serve "King Pym" ! There's some one at Whitehall
That lives obscure, but Pym lives . . .

The PRESBYTERIAN. Nearer !

A Follower of STRAFFORD. Higher

We look to see him ! (*To his Companions.*) I'm to have St.
John

In charge ; was he among the knaves just now
That followed Pym within there ?

Another. The gaunt man
Talking with Rudyard. Did the Earl expect
Pym at his heels so fast ? I like it not.

(Enter MAXWELL.)

Another. Why, man, they rush into the net ! Here's Maxwell—

Ha ! Maxwell ?—How the brethren flock around
The fellow ! Do you feel the Earl's hand yet
Upon your shoulder, Maxwell ?

Max. Gentlemen,
Stand back ! a great thing passes here.

A Follower of STRAFFORD. (*To another.*) The Earl
Is at his work ! (*To M.*) Say, Maxwell, what great thing !
Speak out ! (*To a Presbyterian*) Friends, I've a kindness for
you ! Friends,
I've seen you with St. John . . . O stockishness !
Wear such a ruff, and never call to mind
St. John's head in a charger ?

What—the plague—
Not laugh ?

Another. Say, Maxwell, what it is !

Another. Hush—wait—
The jest will be to wait—

First. And who's to bear
These quiet hypocrites ? You'd swear they came . . .
Came . . . just as we come !

(A PURITAN enters hastily and without observing STRAFFORD'S Followers.)

The PURITAN. How goes on the work?
 Has Pym . . .
 A Follower of STRAFFORD. The secret's out at last—Aha,
 The carrion's scented! Welcome, crow the first!
 Gorge merrily you with the blinking eye!
 "King Pym has fallen!"
 The PURITAN. Pym?
 A STRAFFORD. Pym!
 A PRESBYTERIAN. Only Pym?
 Many of STRAFFORD'S Followers. No, brother—not Pym only
 —Vane as well—
 Rudyard as well—Hampden—Saint John as well—
 A PRESBYTERIAN. My mind misgives . . . can it be true?
 Another. Lost! Lost!
 A STRAFFORD. Say we true, Maxwell?
 The PURITAN. Pride before destruction,
 A haughty spirit goeth before a fall.
 Many of STRAFFORD'S Followers. Ah now! The very thing!
 A word in season!
 A golden apple in a silver picture
 To greet Pym as he passes!

(The folding-doors at the back begin to open, noise and light issuing.)

Max. Stand back, all!
 Many of the PRESBYTERIANS. I'll die with Pym! And I!
 STRAFFORD'S Followers. Now for the text—
 He comes! Quick!
 The PURITAN (with uplifted arms.) How hath the Oppressor
 ceased!
 The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked:
 The sceptre of the Rulers—he who smote
 The People in wrath with a continual stroke—
 That ruled the nations in his anger . . . He
 Is persecuted and none hindereth!

(At the beginning of this speech the doors open, and STRAFFORD, in the greatest disorder, and amid cries from within of "Void the House," staggers out. When he reaches the front of the Stage, silence.)

Straf. Impeach me! Pym! I never struck, I think,
 The felon on that calm insulting mouth
 When it proclaimed—Pym's mouth proclaimed me . . .
 God!
 Was it a word, only a word that held

The outrageous blood back on my heart . . . which beats !
 Which beats ! Some one word . . . "Traitor," did he say,
 Bending that eye, brimful of bitter fire,
 Upon me ?

Mar. (Advancing.) In the Commons' name, their servant
 Demands Lord Strafford's sword.

Straf. What did you say ?

Mar. The Commons bid me ask your Lordship's sword.

Straf. (suddenly recovering, and looking round, draws it, and turns to his Followers.) Let us go forth—follow me, gentlemen—

Draw your swords too—cut any down that bar us ?
 On the King's service ! Maxwell, clear the way !

(*The PRESBYTERIANS prepare to dispute his passage.*)

Straf. Ha—true ! . . . That is, you mistake me, utterly—I will stay—the King himself shall see me—here—Here—I will stay, Mainwaring !—First of all, (To MAXWELL.) Your tablets, fellow ! (*He writes on them.*) (To MAINWARING.) Give that to the King ! Yes, Maxwell, for the next half-hour, I will . . . I will remain your prisoner, I will ! Nay, you shall take my sword !

(*MAXWELL advances to take it.*)

No—no—not that !

Their blood, perhaps, may wipe out all thus far—All up to that—not that ! Why, friend, you see When the King lays his head beneath my foot It will not pay for that ! Go, all of you !

Mar. I grieve, my lord, to disobey : none stir.

Straf. This gentle Maxwell !—Do not touch him, Bryan ! (To the PRESBYTERIANS.) Whichever cur of you will carry this I'll save him from the fate of all the rest—I'll have him made a Peer—I'll . . . none will go ? None ? (*Cries from within of "STRAFFORD."*)

(To his FOLLOWERS.) Slingsby, I've loved you at least—my friend,

Stab me ! I have not time to tell you why . . . You then, dear Bryan ! You, Mainwaring, then !

. . . Ah, that's because I spoke so hastily

At Allerton—the King had vexed me . . .

(To the PRESBYTERIANS.) You Miscreants—you then—that I'll exterminate !

—Not even you ? If I live over it

The King is sure to have your heads—you know

I'm not afraid of that—you understand

That if I chose to wait—made up my mind

To live this minute—he would do me right!
 But what if I can't live this minute through?
 If nothing can repay that minute? Pym
 With his pursuing smile—Pym to be there!

(Louder cries of "STRAFFORD.")

The King! I troubled him—stood in the way
 Of his negotiations—was the one
 Great obstacle to peace—the Enemy
 Of Scotland—and he sent for me—from York—
 My safety guaranteed—having prepared
 A Parliament! I see! And at Whitehall
 The Queen was whispering with Vane . . . I see
 The trap! I curse the King! I wish Pym well!
 Wish all his brave friends well! Say, all along
 Strafford was with them—all along, at heart,
 I hated Charles and wished them well! And say

(tearing off the George and dashing it down)

That as I tread this gew-gaw under foot,
 I cast his memory from me! One stroke, now!
 (His own Adherents disarm him. Renewed cries of "STRAFFORD.")

I'll not go . . . they shall drag me by the hair!
 (Changing suddenly to calm.) England! I see her arm in
 this! I yield.
 Why—'tis the fairest triumph! Why desire
 To cheat them? I would never stoop to that—
 Be mean enough for that! Let all have end!
 Don't repine, Slingsby . . . have they not a right?
 They claim me—hearken—lead me to them, Bryan!
 No—I myself should offer up myself.
 Pray you now . . . Pym awaits me . . . pray you now!

(Putting aside those who attempt to support him, STRAFFORD reaches the doors—they open wide. HAMPDEN, etc., and a crowd discovered; and at the bar, PYM standing apart. As STRAFFORD kneels the scene shuts.)

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Whitchall.*

The King, the Queen, Hollis, Carlisle. (Vane, Holland, Savile, in the background.)

Car. Answer them, Hollis, for his sake!—One word!

Cha. (To Hollis.) You stand, silent and cold, as though I were

Deceiving you—my friend, my playfellow
Of other times! What wonder after all?
Just so I dreamed my People loved me!

Hol. Sire,
It is yourself that you deceive, not me!
You'll quit me comforted—your mind made up
That since you've talked thus much and grieved thus much,
All you can do for Strafford has been done.

Queen. If you kill Strafford . . . come, we grant you leave,
Suppose . . .

Hol. I may withdraw, Sire? *Car.* Hear them out!
'Tis the last chance for Strafford! Hear them out!

Hol. "If we kill Strafford"—on the eighteenth day
Of Strafford's trial—*We!*

Cha. Pym, my good Hollis—
Pym, I should say!

Hol. Ah, true—Sire, pardon me!
You witness our proceedings every day,
But the screened gallery, I might have guessed,
Admits of such a partial glimpse at us—
Pym takes up all the room, shuts out the view!
Still, on my honour, Sire, the rest of the place
Is not unoccupied: the Commons sit
—That's England; Ireland sends, and Scotland too,
Their representatives: the Peers that judge
Are easily distinguished; one remarks
The People here and there . . . but the close curtain
Must hide so much!

Queen. Acquaint your insolent crew,
This day the curtain shall be dashed aside!
It served a purpose!

Hol. Think! This very day?
Ere Strafford rises to defend himself?

Cha. I will defend him, Sir ! sanction the past—
This day—it ever was my purpose ! Rage
At me, not Strafford ! Oh, I shall be paid
By Strafford's look !

Car. (To HOLLIS.) Nobly ! Oh, will he not
Do nobly ?

Hol. Sire, you will do honestly ;
And, for that look, I too would be a king !

Cha. (after a pause.) Only, to do this now—just when they
seek

To make me out a tyrant—one that's deaf
To subjects' prayers,—shall I oppose them now ?
It seems their will the Trial should proceed . . .
'Tis palpably their will !

Hol. You'll lose your throne :
But it were no bright moment save for that !
Strafford, your prime support, the sole roof-tree
That props this quaking House of Privilege,
(Floods come, winds beat, and see—the treacherous sand !)
Doubtless if the mere putting forth an arm
Could save him, you'd save Strafford !

Cha. And they mean
Calmly to consummate this wrong ! No hope ?
This ineffaceable wrong ! No pity, then ?

Hol. No plague in store for perfidy ?—Farewell !
You summoned me . . . (To CARLISLE.) You, Lady, bade me
come
To save the Earl ! I came, thank God for it,
To learn how far such perfidy can go !
. . . You dare to talk with me of saving him
Who have just ruined Strafford !

Cha. I ?
Hol. See, now !
Eighteen days long he throws, one after one,
Our charges back : a blind moth-eaten law !
—He'll break from us at last ! And whom to thank ?
The Mouse that gnawed the Lion's net for him
Got a good friend,—but he, the other Mouse,
That looked on while the Lion freed himself—
Fared he so well, does any fable say ?

Cha. What can you mean ?

Hol. Pym never could have proved
Strafford's design of bringing up the troops
To force this kingdom to obedience : Vane—
Your servant, Vane . . .

Queen.

Well, Sir ?

Hol.

. . . Has proved it.

Cha.

Vane ?

Hol. This day ! Did Vane deliver up or no
Those notes which, furnished by his son to Pym,
Have sealed . . .

Cha. Speak, Vane ! As I shall live, I know
Nothing that Vane has done ! What treason next ?
I wash my hands of it ! Vane, speak the truth !
—Ask Vane himself !

Hol. I will not speak to Vane,
Who speaks to Pym and Hampden every day !

Queen. Speak to Vane's master then ! Why should he wish
For Strafford's death ?

Hol. Why ? Strafford cannot turn
As you sit there—bid you come forth and say
If every hateful act were not set down
In his commission ?—Whether you contrived
Or no that all the violence should seem
His work, the gentle ways—your own, as if
He counteracted your kind impulses
While . . . but you know what he could say ! And then
Would he produce, mark you, a certain charge
To set your own express commands aside,
If need were, and be blameless ! He'd say, then . . .

Cha. Hold !

Hol. . . . Say who bade him break the Parlia-
ment,—
Find out some pretext to set up sword-law . . .

Queen. Retire, Sir !

Cha. Vane—once more—what Vane dares do
I know not . . . he is rash . . . a fool . . . I know
Nothing of Vane !

Hol. Well—I believe you ; Sire,
Believe me, in return, that . . .
(*Turning to CARLISLE.*) Gentle Lady,
The few words I would say the stones might hear
Sooner than these . . . I'll say them all to you,
You, with the heart ! The question, trust me, takes
Another shape to-day : 'tis not if Charles
Or England shall succumb,—but which shall pay
The forfeit, Strafford or his Master : Sire,
You loved me once . . . think on my warning now ! [Exit.]

Cha. On you and on your warning both !—Carlisle !
That paper !

Queen. But consider !

Cha. Give it me !
There—signed—will that content you ?—Do not speak !
You have betrayed me, Vane !—See—any day
(According to the tenour of that paper)

He bids your brother bring the Army up—
Strafford shall head it and take full revenge !
Seek Strafford ! Let him have it, look, before
He rises to defend himself !

Queen. In truth ?
Clever of Hollis, now, to work a change
Like this ! You were reluctant . . .

Cha. Say, Carlisle,
Your brother Percy brings the Army up—
Falls on the Parliament —(I'll think of you
My Hollis !)—say we plotted long . . . 'tis mine,
The scheme is mine, remember ! Say I cursed
Vane's folly in your hearing ! If that man
Does rise to do us shame, the fault shall lie
With you, Carlisle !

Car. Nay, fear not me ! but still
That's a bright moment, Sire, you throw away . . .
Oh, draw the veil and save him !

Queen. Go, Carlisle !
Car. (aside, and going). I shall see Strafford—speak to him :
my heart
Must never beat so, then !

And if I tell
The truth ? What's gained by falsehood ? There they stand
Whose trade it is—whose life it is ! How vain
To gild such rottenness ! Strafford shall know,
Thoroughly know them !

The Queen (as she leaves the KING, etc.). Trust to me !
(To CARLISLE.) Carlisle,
You seem inclined alone of all the Court,
To serve poor Strafford : this bold plan of yours
Merits much praise, and yet . . .

Car. Time presses, Madam.
Queen. Yet . . . may it not be something premature ?
Strafford defends himself to-day—reserves
Some wondrous effort . . . one may well suppose—
He'll say some overwhelming fact, Carlisle !

Car. Ay, Hollis hints as much.
Cha. Why linger then ?
Haste with the scheme—my scheme—I shall be there
To watch his look ! Tell him I watch his look !

Queen. Stay, we'll precede you !
Car. At your pleasure.
Cha. Say . . .
Say . . . Vane is hardly ever at Whitehall !
I shall be there, remember !

Car. Doubt me not !
Cha. On our return, Carlisle, we wait you here !

Car. I'll bring his answer; Sire, I follow you.

[*Exeunt K., etc.*

Ah . . . but he would be very sad to find
The King so faithless, and I take away
All that he cares to live for: let it go—
'Tis the King's scheme!

My Strafford, I can save . . .
Nay, I *have* saved you—yet am scarce content,
Because my poor name will not cross your mind . . .
Strafford, how much I am unworthy you! [Exit.]

SCENE II.—*A Passage adjoining Westminster Hall.*

Many groups of Spectators of the Trial (which is visible from the back of the Stage)—Officers of the Court, etc.

1st Spec. More crowd than ever! . . . Not know Hampden, man?

That's he—by Pym—Pym that is speaking now!
No, truly—if you look so high you'll see
Little enough of either!

2nd Spec. Hush . . . Pym's arm
Points like a prophet's rod!

3rd Spec. Ay—ay—we've heard
Some pretty speaking . . . yet the Earl escapes!

4th Spec. I fear it: just a foolish word or two
About his children . . . and they see, forsooth,
Not England's Foe in Strafford—but the Man
Who, sick, half-blind . . .

2nd Spec. What's that Pym's saying now
That makes the curtains flutter . . . look! A hand
Clutches them . . . Ah! The King's hand!

5th Spec. I had thought
Pym was not near so tall! What said he, friend?

2nd Spec. "Nor is this way a novel way of blood" . . .
And the Earl turns as if to . . . look! look!

Many Spectators. Heaven—
What ails him . . . no—he rallies . . . see—goes on
And Strafford smiles. Strange!

(Enter a PURITAN.)

The Puritan.

Haselrig!

Many Spectators.

Friend? Friend?

The Puritan. Lost—utterly lost . . . just when we looked
for Pym

To make a stand against the ill effects

Of the Earl's speech! Is Haselrig without?

Pym's message is to him!

[Exit.]

3rd Spec.

Now, said I true?

Will the Earl leave them yet at fault or no?

1st Spec. Never believe it, man! These notes of Vane's
Ruin the Earl.

5th Spec. A brave end . . . not a whit

Less firm, less . . . Pym all over! Then, the Trial

Is closed . . . no . . . Strafford means to speak again!

An Officer. Stand back, there!

5th Spec. Why, the Earl is coming hither!

Before the court breaks up! His brother, look,—

You'd say he deprecated some fierce act

In Strafford's mind just now!

An Officer. Stand back, I say!

2nd Spec. Who's the veiled woman that he talks with?

Many Spectators. Hush—
The Earl! the Earl!

(Enter STRAFFORD, SLINGSBY and other Secretaries, HOLLIS,
CARLISLE, MAXWELL, BALFOUR, etc. STRAFFORD con-
verses with CARLISLE.)

Hol.

So near the end! Be patient—

Return!

Straf. (To his Secretaries.) Here—anywhere—or—'tis
freshest hero . . .

(To spend one's April here—the blossom-month!)

Set it down here! (They arrange a table, papers, etc.)

What, Pym to quail, to sink
Because I glance at him, yet . . .

Well, to end—

What's to be answered, Slingsby? Let us end!

(To CARLISLE.) Girl, I refuse his offer; whatsoe'er

It be! Too late! Tell me no word of him!

(To HOLLIS.) 'Tis something, Hollis, I assure you that—

To stand, sick as you are, some eighteen days

Fighting for life and fame against a pack

Of very curs, that lie thro' thick and thin,

Eat flesh and bread by wholesale, and can't say

"Strafford" if it would take my life!

Car.

Be kind

This once! Glance at the paper . . . if you will

But glance at it. . . .

Straf. Already at my heels !
 Pym's fainting bloodhounds scent the track again !
 Peace, girl ! Now, Slingsby !

(*Messengers from LANF, and other of STRAFFORD's Counsel
 within the Hall are coming and going during the
 Scene.*)

Straf. (*setting himself to write and dictate*). I shall beat
 you, Hollis !
 Do you know that ? In spite of all your tricks—
 In spite of Pym ! Your Pym that shrank from me !

Eliot would have contrived it otherwise !
 (To a Messenger.) In truth ? This slip, tell Lane, contains as
 much

As I can call to mind about the matter.

(To HOLLIS.) Eliot would have disdained . . .

(*Calling after the Messenger.*) And Radcliffe, say—
 The only person who could answer Pym—
 Is safe in prison, just for that !

(Continuing to HOLLIS.) Well—well—

It had not been recorded in that case,

I baffled you !

(To CARLISLE.) Nay, girl, why look so grieved ?

All's gained without the King ! You saw Pym quail ?

. . . What shall I do when they acquit me, think you,

But tranquilly resume my task as though

Nothing had intervened since I proposed

To call that traitor to account ! Such tricks,

Trust me, shall not be played a second time—

Even against old Laud, with his grey hair . . .

Your good work, Hollis !—And to make amends

You, Lucy, shall be there when I impeach

Pym and his fellows !

Hol. Wherefore not protest

Against our whole proceeding long ago ?

Why feel indignant now ? Why stand this while

Enduring patiently . . .

Straf. (*To CARLISLE.*) Girl, I'll tell you—

You—and not Pym . . . you, the slight graceful girl,

Tall for a flowering lily—and not Charles . . .

Why I stood patient ! I was fool enough

To see the will of England in Pym's will—

To dream that I had wronged her—and to wait

Her judgment,—when, behold, in place of it . . .

(To a MESSENGER who whispers.) Tell Lane to answer no such

question ! Law . . .

I grapple with their Law ! I'm here to try

My actions by their standard, not my own !

Their Law allowed that levy . . . what's the rest
To Pym, or Lane, or any but myself?

Car. Then cast not thus your only chance away—
The King's so weak . . . secure this chance! 'Twas Vane
—Vane, recollect, who furnished Pym the notes . . .

Straf. Fit . . . very fit . . . those precious notes of Vane,
To close the Trial worthily! I feared
Some spice of nobleness might linger yet
To spoil the character of all the past!
It pleased me . . . and (*rising passionately*) I will go back and
say

As much—to them—to England! Follow me!
I have a word to say! There! my defence
Is done!

(To CARLISLE.) Stay . . . why be proud? Why care to own
My gladness—my surprise? . . . no—not surprise!
Oh, why insist upon the little pride
Of doing all myself and sparing him
The pain? Girl, say the triumph is my King's!
When Pym grew pale, and trembled, and sank down—
His image was before me . . . could I fail?
Girl, care not for the past—so indistinct—
Obscure—there's nothing to forgive in it
'Tis so forgotten! From this day begins
A new life, founded on a new belief
In Charles . . .

Hol. Pym comes . . . tell Pym it is unfair!
Appeal to Pym! Hampden—and Vane! see, Strafford!
Say how unfair . . .

Straf. To Pym? I would say nothing!
I would not look upon Pym's face again!

Car. Stay . . . let me have to think I pressed your hand!

[*Exeunt STRAFFORD, etc.*

(Enter HAMPDEN and VANE.)

Vane. O Hampden, save that great misguided man!
Plead Strafford's cause with Pym—I have remarked
He moved no muscle when we all spoke loud
Against him . . . you had but to breathe—he turned
Those kind, large eyes upon you—kind to all
But Strafford . . . whom I murder!

(Enter PYM (*conversing with the Solicitor-General, ST. JOHN, the Managers of the Trial, FIENNES, RUDYARD, etc.*)

Rud. Horrible!
Till now all hearts were with you . . . I withdraw

For one ! Too horrible ! Oh, we mistake
 Your purpose, Pym . . . you cannot snatch away
 The last spar from the drowning man !

Fier. He talks
 With St. John of it—see how quietly !
 (To other PRESBYTERIANS.) You'll join us ? Mind, we own
 he merits death—

But this new course is monstrous ! Vane, take heart !
 This Bill of his Attainder shall not have
 One true man's hand to it.

Vane. But hear me, Pym !
 Confront your Bill—your own Bill . . . what is it ?
 You cannot catch the Earl on any charge . . .
 No man will say the Law has hold of him
 On any charge . . . and therefore you resolve
 To take the general sense on his desert,—
 As though no Law existed, and we met
 To found one !—You refer to every man
 To speak his thought upon this hideous mass
 Of half-borne out assertions—dubious hints
 Hereafter to be cleared—distortions—ay,
 And wild inventions. Every man is saved
 The task of fixing any single charge
 On Strafford : he has but to see in him
 The Enemy of England . . .

Pym. A right scruple !
 I have heard some called England's Enemy
 With less consideration.

Vane. Pity me !
 Me—brought so low—who hoped to do so much
 For England—her true Servant—Pym, your friend . . .
 Indeed you made me think I was your friend !
 But I have murdered Strafford. . . . I have been
 The instrument of this ! who shall removo
 That memory from me ?

Pym. I absolve you, Vane !
 Take you no care for aught that you have done !
Varz. Dear Hampden, not this Bill ! Reject this Bill !
 He staggers thro' the ordeal . . . let him go !
 Strew no fresh fire before him ! Plead for us !
 With Pym . . . what God is he, to have no heart
 Like ours, yet make us love him ?

Rud. Hampden, plead
 For us ! When Strafford spoke your eyes were thick
 With tears . . . save him, dear Hampden !

Hamp. England speaks
 Louder than Strafford ! Who are we, to play
 The generous pardoner at her expense—

Magnanimously waive advantages —

And if he conquer us . . . applaud his skill ?

Vane. (To Pym.) He was your friend !

Pym. I have heard that before.

Fien. But England trusts you . . .

Hamp. Shame be his, who turns

The opportunity of serving her

She trusts him with, to his own mean account —

Who would look nobly frank at her expense !

Fien. I never thought it could have come to this !

Pym. (*turning from St. JOHN.*) But I have made myself familiar, Fiennes,

With that one thought — have walked, and sat, and slept,

That thought before me ! I have done such things,

Being the chosen man that should destroy

This Strafford ! You have taken up that thought

To play with — for a gentle stimulant —

To give a dignity to idler life

By the dim prospect of this deed to come . . .

But ever with the softening, sure belief,

That all would come some strange way right at last !

Fien. Had we made out some weightier charge . . .

Pym. You say

That these are potty charges ! Can we come

To the real charge at all ? There he is safe !

In tyranny's stronghold ! Apostasy

Is not a crime — Treachery not a crime !

The cheek burns, the blood tingles, when you name

Their names, but where's the power to take revenge

Upon them ? We must make occasion serve :

The Oversight, pay for the Giant Sin

That mocks us !

Rud. But this unexampled course —
This Bill . . .

Pym. By this, we roll the clouds away
Of Precedent and Custom, and at once
Bid the great light which God has set in all,
The conscience of each bosom, shine upon
The guilt of Strafford ; each shall lay his hand
Upon his breast, and say if this one man
Deserve to die, or no, by those he sought
First to undo.

Fien. You, Vane — you answer him !

Vane. Pym, you see farthest . . . I can only see
Strafford . . . I'd not pass over that pale corse
For all beyond !

Rud. and others. Pym, you would look so great !
Forgive him ! He would join us ! now he finds

How false the King has been! The pardon, too,
Should be your own! Yourself should bear to Strafford
The pardon of the Commons!

Pym (starting). Meet him? Strafford?
Have we to meet once more, then? Be it so!
And yet—the prophecy seemed half fulfilled
When, at the trial, as he gazed—my youth—
Our friendship—all old thoughts came back at once
And left me, for a time . . .

Vane (aside to RUDYARD). Moved, is he not?
Pym. To-morrow we discuss the points of law
With Lane . . . to-morrow!

Vane. Time enough, dear Pym!
See, he relents! I knew he would relent!

Pym. The next day, Haselrig, you introduce
The Bill of his Attainer. (*After a pause.*) Pray for me!

SCENE III.—*Whitchall.*

The KING.

Cha. Strafford, you are a Prince! Not to reward you
—Nothing does that—but only for a whim!
My noble servant!—To defend himself
Thus irresistibly . . . withholding aught
That seemed to implicate us!

We have done
Less gallantly by Strafford! Well, the future
Must recompense the past.

She tarries long!
I understand you, Strafford, now!

The scheme—
Carlisle's mad scheme—he'll sanction it, I fear,
For love of me! 'Twas too precipitate:
Before the Army's fairly on its march,
He'll be at large: no matter . . .

Well, Carlisle

(Enter Pym.)

Pym. Fear me not, Sire . . . my mission is to save,
This time!

Cha. To break thus on me!—Unannounced . . .

Pym. It is of Strafford I would speak.

Cha. No more

Of Strafford! I have heard too much from you!

Pym. I spoke, Sire, for the People: will you hear
A word upon my own account?

Cha. 'Of Strafford?

(*Aside.*) So, turns the tide already? Have we tamed
The insolent brawler?—Strafford's brave defence
Is swift in its effect! (To *Pym.*) Lord Strafford, Sir,
Has spoken for himself!

Pym. Sufficiently
I would apprise you of the novel course
The People take: the Trial fails, . . .

Cha. Yes—yes—
We are aware, Sir: for your part in it
Means shall be found to thank you.

Pym. Pray you, read
This schedule! (*as the KING reads it*) I would learn from your
own mouth

—(It is a matter much concerning me)—
Whether, if two Estates of England shall concede
The death of Strafford, on the grounds set forth
Within that parchment, you, Sire, can resolve
To grant your full consent to it. That Bill
Is framed by me: if you determine, Sire,
That England's manifested will shall guide
Your judgment, ere another week that will
Shall manifest itself. If not,—I cast
Aside the measure.

Cha. . . . You can hinder, then,
The introduction of that Bill?

Pym. I can.

Cha. He is my friend, Sir: I have wronged him: mark you,
Had I not wronged him—this might be!—You think
Because you hate the Earl . . . (turn not away—
We know you hate him)—no one else could love
Strafford . . . but he has saved me—many times—
Think what he has endured . . . proud too . . . you feel
What he endured!—And, do you know one strange,
One frightful thing? We all have used that man
As though he had been ours . . . with not a source
Of happy thoughts except in us . . . and yet
Strafford has children, and a home as well,
Just as if we had never been! . . . Ah, Sir,
You are moved—you—a solitary man
Wed to your cause—to England if you will!

Pym. Yes . . . think, my soul . . . England! Draw not
back!

Cha. Prevent that Bill, Sir . . . Oh, your course was fair
 Till now ! Why, in the end, 'tis I should sign
 The warrant for his death ! You have said much
 That I shall ponder on ; I never meant
 Strafford should serve me any more : I take
 The Commons' counsel : but this Bill is yours—
 Not worthy of its leader . . . care not, Sir,
 For that, however ! I will quite forget
 You named it to me ! You are satisfied ?

Pym. Listen to me, Sire ! Eliot laid his hand,
 Wasted and white, upon my forehead once ;
 Wentworth . . . he's gone now ! . . . has talked on, whole
 nights,
 And I beside him ; Hampden loves me ; Sire,
 How can I breathe and not wish England well—
 And her King well ?

Cha. I thank you, Sir ! You leave
 That King his servant ! Thanks, Sir !

Pym. Let me speak
 —Who may not speak again ! whose spirit yearns
 For a cool night after this weary day !
 —Who would not have my heart turn sicker yet
 In a new task, more fatal, more august,
 More full of England's utter weal or woe . . .
 I thought, Sire, could I find myself with you—
 After this Trial—alone—as man to man—
 I might say something—warn you—pray you—save you—
 Mark me, King Charles, save— you !
 But God must do it. Yet I warn you, Sire—
 (With Strafford's faded eyes yet full on me)
 As you would have no deeper question moved
 —“How long the Many shall endure the One” . . .
 Assure me, Sire, if England shall assent
 To Strafford's death, you will not interfere !
 Or—

Cha. God forsakes me ! I am in a net . . .
 I cannot move ! Let all be as you say !

(Enter CARLISLE.)

Car. He loves you—looking beautiful with joy
 Because you sent me ! he would spare you all
 The pain ! he never dreamed you would forsake
 Your servant in the evil day—nay, see
 Your scheme returned ! That generous heart of his !
 He needs it not—or, needing it, disdains
 A course that might endanger you—you, Sire,
 Whom Strafford from his inmost soul . . .

(*Seeing Pym.*) No fear—
 No fear for Strafford ! all that's true and brave
 On your own side shall help us ! we are now
 Stronger than ever !

Ha—what, Sire, is this ?
 All is not well ! What parchment have you there ?

[CHARLES drops it, and exits.]

Pym. Sire, much is saved us both : farewell !

Car. Stay—stay—
 This cursed measure—you'll not dare—you mean
 To frighten Charles ! This Bill—look—

(As *Pym* reads it.)

Why, your lip

Whitens—you could not read one line to me
 Your voice would falter so ! It shakes you now—
 And will you dare . . .

Pym. No recreant yet to her !
 The great word went from England to my soul,
 And I arose ! The end is very near ! [Exit.]

Car. I save him ! All have shrunk from him beside—
 'Tis only I am left ! Heaven will make strong
 The hand as the true heart ! Then let me die ! [Exit]

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Whitshall.*

HOLLIS, CARLISLE.

Hol. Tell the King, then ! Come in with me !

Car. Not so !
 He must not hear, 'till it succeeds !

Hol. Vain ! Vain !
 No dream was half so vain—you'll rescue Strafford
 And outwit Pym ! I cannot tell you . . . girl,
 The block pursues me—all the hideous show . . .

To-day . . . is it to-day ? And all the while
 He's sure of the King's pardon . . . think, I have
 To tell this man he is to die !

The King

May rend his hair for me ! I'll not see Strafford !

Car. Only, if I succeed, remember—Charles
 Has saved him ! He would hardly value life
 Unless his gift.

My staunch friends wait ! Go in—
 You must go in to Charles !

Hol. And all beside
 Left Strafford long ago—the King has signed
 The warrant for his death . . . the Queen was sick
 Of the eternal subject ! For the Court,—
 The Trial was amusing in its way
 Only too much of it . . . the Earl withdrew
 In time ! But you—fragile—alone—so young !
 Amid rude mercenaries—you devised
 A plan to save him ! Even tho' it fails
 What shall reward you ?

Lady Car. I may go, you think,
 To France with him ? And you reward me, friend !
 Who lived with Strafford even from his youth
 Before he set his heart on state-affairs
 And they bent down that noble brow of his—
 I have learned somewhat of his latter life
 And all the future I shall know—but, Hollis,
 I ought to make his youth my own as well !
 Tell me—when he is saved !

Hol. My gentle girl,
 He should know all—should love you—but 'tis vain !

Car. No—no—too late now ! Let him love the King !
 'Tis the King's scheme ! I have your word—remember !—
 We'll keep the old delusion up ! But, hush !

Hush ! Each of us has work to do beside !
 Go to the King ! I hope—Hollis—I hope !
 Say nothing of my scheme ! Hush, while we speak
 Think where He is ! Now for my gallant friends !

Hol. Where He is ! Calling wildly upon Charles—
 Guessing his fate—pacing the prison-floor . . .
 Let the King tell him ! I'll not look on Strafford ! [Exit.]

SCENE II.—*The Tower.*

STRAFFORD sitting with his Children. They sing.

*O bell' andare
Per barca in mare,
Verso la sera
Di Primavera !*

William. (The boat's in the broad moonlight all this while)

*Verso la sera
Di Primavera.*

And the boat shoots from underneath the moon
Into the shadowy distance—only still
You hear the dipping oar,

Verso la sera . . .

And faint—and fainter—and then all's quite gone,
Music and light and all, like a lost star.

Anne. But you should sleep, father: you were to sleep!

Straf. I do sleep, dearest; or if not—you know
There's such a thing as . . .

Wil. You're too tired to sleep?

Straf. It will come by-and-bye and all day long,
In that old quiet house I told you of:
We'll sleep safe there.

Anne. Why not in Ireland?

Straf. Ah!

Too many dreams!—That song's for Venice, William:
You know how Venice looks upon the map . . .
Isles that the mainland hardly can let go?

Wil. You've been to Venice, father?

Straf. I was young then

Wil. A city with no King; that's why I like
Even a song that comes from Venice!

Straf. William!

Wil. Oh, I know why! Anne, do you love the King?
But I'll see Venice for myself one day.

Straf. See many lands, boy—England last of all—
That way you'll love her best.

Wil. Why do men say
You sought to ruin her, then?

Straf. Ah . . . they say that.

Wil. Why?

Straf. I suppose they must have words to say,
As you to sing.

Anne. But they make songs beside :
Last night I heard one, in the street beneath,
That called you . . . Oh, the names !

Wil. Don't mind her, father !
They soon left off when I called out to them !

Straf. We shall so soon be out of it, my boy !
'Tis not worth while : who heeds a foolish song ?

Wil. Why, not the King !

Straf. Well : it has been the fate
Of better men, and yet . . . why not feel sure
That Time, who in the twilight comes to mend
All the fantastic Day's caprice—consign
Unto the ground once more the ignoble Term,
And raise the Genius on his orb again—
That Time will do me right ?

Anne. (Shall we sing, William ?
He does not look thus when we sing.)

Straf. For Ireland,—
Something is done . . . too little, but enough
To show what might have been :—

Wil. (I have no heart
To sing now ! Anne, how very sad he looks !
Oh, I so hate the King for all he says !)

Straf. Forsook them ! What, the common songs will run
That I forsook the People ? Nothing more ?
. . . Ay, Fume, the scribe, will pause awhile, no doubt,
Turning a deaf ear to her thousand slaves
Noisy to be enrolled,—will register
All curious glosses, subtle notices,
Ingenious clearings-up one fain would see
Beside that plain inscription of The Name—
The Patriot Pym, or the Apostate Strafford !

(*The children resume their song timidly, but break off.*)

(Enter HOLLIS and an Attendant.)

Straf. No . . . Hollis ? in good time !—Who is he ?

Hollis. One
That must be present.

Straf. Ah—I understand—
They will not let me see poor Laud alone !
How politic ! They'd use me by degrees
To solitude : and just as you came in
I was solicitous what life to lead
When Strafford's "not so much as Constable
"In the King's service." Is there any means
To keep one's self awake ? What would you do
After this bustle, Hollis, in my place ?

Hol. Strafford . . .

Straf. Observe, not but that Pym and you
Will find me news enough—news I shall hear
Under a quince-tree by a fish-pond side
At Wentworth. Or, a better project now—
What if when all is over, and the Saints
Reign, and the Senate goes or swimmingly,—
What if I venture up, some day, unseen—
To saunter through the Town—notice how Pym,
The Tribune, likes Whitehall—drop quietly
Into a tavern—hear a point discussed—
As, whether Strafford's name were John or Richard—
And be myself appealed to . . . I, who shall
Myself have near forgotten!

Hol. I would speak . . .

Straf. Then you shall speak,—not now: I want, just now,
To hear the sound of my own tongue. This place
Is full of ghosts!

Hol. Will you not hear me, Strafford?

Straf. Oh, readily! . . . Only, one droll thing more,—
The minister! Who will advise the King,
And yet have health?—children, for aught I know!
—My patient pair of traitors! Ah . . . but, William—
Does not his cheek grow thin?

Wl. 'Tis you look thir,
Father!

Straf. A scamper 'er the breezy wolds
Sets all to riglets!

Hol. You cannot sure forget
A prison-roof is o'er you, Strafford?

Straf. No,
Why, no. I would not touch on that, the first.
I left you that. Well, Hollis?

. . . Say at once
The King could find no time to set me free!
A mask at Theobald's?

Hol. Hush: no such affair
Detains him.

Straf. True: what needs so great a matter?
The Queen's lip may be sore!—Well; when he pleases,—
Only, I want the air: it vexes one
To be pent up so long!

Hol. The King . . . I bear
His message, Strafford . . . pray you, let me speak!

Straf. Go, William! Anne, try o'er your song again!
[The children retire.
They shall be loyal, friend, at all events.
I know your message: you have nothing new

To tell me : from the first I guessed as much.
 I know, instead of coming here at once—
 Leading me forth before them by the hand,—
 I know the King will leave the door ajar
 As though I were escaping . . . let me fly
 While the mob gapes upon Some show prepared
 On the other side of the river !

Hol. (*to his companion*). Tell him all ;
 I knew my throat would thicken thus . . . Speak, you !
Straf. 'Tis all one—I forgive him. Let me have
 The order of release !

. . . I've heard, as well,
 Of certain poor manœuvrings to avoid
 The granting pardon at his proper risk ;
 First, he must prattle somewhat to the Lords—
 Must talk a trifle with the Commons first—
 Be grieved I should abuse his confidence,
 And far from blaming them, and Where's the order ?

Hol. Spare me !

Straf. Why . . . he'd not have me steal away ?
 —With an old doublet and a steeple hat
 Like Pryme's ? Be smuggled into France, perhaps ?
 Hollis, 'tis for my children ! 'Twas for them
 I e'er consented to stand day by day
 And give those Puritans the best of words—
 Be patient—speak when called upon—observe
 Their rules,—and not give all of them the lie !

Hol. No—Strafford . . . no escape . . . no . . . dearest
 Strafford !

Straf. What's in that boy of mine that he should be
 Son to a prison-breaker ? I shall stay,
 And he'll stay with me ! Charles should know as much—
 He too has children !

(*Turning to Hollis's companion*). Ah, you feel for me !
 No need to hide that face ! Though it have looked
 Upon me from the judgment-seat . . . I know
 Strangely, that somewhere it has looked on me . . .
 Still there is One who does not come—there's One
 That shut out Heaven from me . . .

Hol. Think on it then !
 On Heaven . . . and calmly . . . as one . . . as one to die !

Straf. Die ? True, friend, all must die, and all must need
 Forgiveness : I forgive him from my soul.

Hol. Be constant, now . . . be grand and brave . . . be now
 Just as when . . . Oh, I cannot stay for words . . .

'Tis a world's wonder . . . but . . . but . . . you must die !

Straf. Sir, if your errand is to set me free

This heartless jest will . . .

Hollis—you turn white,•

And your lip shivers!—What if . . .

Oh, we'll end,

We'll end this! See this paper—warm . . . feel . . . warm
With lying next my heart! Whose hand is there?

Whose promise? Read! Read loud! For God to hear!

“Strafford shall take no hurt” . . . read it, I say!

“In person, honour, nor estate.” . . .

Hol.

The King . . .

Straf. I could unking him by a breath! You sit

Where Loudon sate . . . Loudon, who came to tell

The certain end, and offer me Pym's pardon

If I'd forsake the King—and I stood firm

On my King's faith! The King who lived . . .

Hol.

To sign

The warrant for your death.

Straf.

“Put not your trust

“In Princes, neither in the sons of men,

“In whom is no salvation!” On that King—

Upon his head . . .

Cha. O Hollis, he will curse me!

Hol. The scaffold is prepared—they wait for you—

He has consented . . .

Cha.

No, no—stay first—Strafford!

You would not see me perish at your foot . . .

It was wrung from me! Only curse me not!

The Queen had cruel eyes! And Vane declared . . .

And I believed I could have rescued you . . .

Strafford—they threaten me! and . . . well, speak now,

And let me die!—

Hol. (To STRAFFORD.) As you hope grace from God,
Be merciful to this most wretched man!

VOICES FROM WITHIN:

Verso la sera

Di Primavera.

Straf. (After a pause.) You'll be good to those children,
Sire? I know

You'll not believe her even should the Queen

Think they take after one they never saw!

I had intended that my son should live

A stranger to these matters . . . but you are

So utterly deprived of friends! He too

Must serve you—will you not be good to him?

Stay, Sire—stay—do not promise—do not swear!

And, Hollis—do the best you can for me!

I've not a soul to trust to: Wandesford's dead—

And you've got Radcliffe safe—and Laud is here . . .
I've had small time of late for my affairs—
But I'll trust any of you . . . Pym himself—
No one could hurt them: there's an infant too—
. . . These tedious cares! Your Majesty could spare them—
But 'tis so awkward—dying in a hurry!
. . . Nay—Pardon me, my King! I had forgotten
Your education, trials, and temptations
And weakness . . . I have said a peevish word—
But, mind, I bless you at the last! You know
'Tis between you and me . . . what has the world
To do with it? Farewell!

Cha. (at the door) Balfour! Balfour!
... What, die? Strafford to die? This Strafford here?
Balfour! ... Nay, Strafford, do not speak ... Balfour!

(Enter BALFOUR.)

The Parliament . . . go to them—I grant all
Demands! Their sittings shall be permanent—
Tell them to keep their money if they will . . .
I'll come to them for every coat I wear
And every crust I eat, only I choose
To pardon Strafford—Strafford—my brave friend!

Bal. (aside.) Is he mad, Hollis?

Cha. . . . But the Queen . . . ah, the Queen !—make haste,
Balfour !
—You never heard the People howl for blood,
Beside !

Bal. Your Majesty may hear them now :
The walls can hardly keep their murmurs out
Please you retire !

Chas. Take all the troops, Balfour.

Bal. There are some hundred thousand of the crowd.
Cha. Come with me, Strafford ! You'll not fear them, friend !

Straf Balfour, say nothing to the world of this!
I charge you, as a dying man, forget
You gazed upon this agony of one . . .
Of one . . . or if . . . why you may say, Balfour
The King was sorry—very—'tis no shame!
Yes, you may say he even wept, Balfour,—
And that I walked the lighter to the block
Because of it. I shall walk lightly, Sire!
—For I shall save you . . . save you at the last!
Earth fades, Heaven dawns on me . . . I shall wa
Before God's throne : the moment's close at hand

When Man the first, last time, has leave to lay
 His whole heart bare before its Maker—leave
 To clear up the long error of a life
 And choose one happiness for evermore.
 With all mortality about me, Charles,
 The sudden wreck—the dregs—till violent death . . .
 I'll pray for you! Thro' all the Angel-song
 Shall penetrate one weak and quivering prayer—
 I'll say how good you are . . . inwardly good
 And pure . . . (*The King falls: HOLLIS raises him.*)
 Be witness, he could not prevent
 My death! I'll go—ere he awakes—go now!
 All must be ready—did you say, Balfour,
 The crowd began to murmur?—They'll be kept
 Too late for sermon at St. Antholin's!
 Now—but tread softly—children are at play
 In the next room—Ah, just my children—Hollis!
 —Or . . . no—support the King! (*a door is unbarred.*)
 Hark . . . they are here!
 Stay, Hollis!—Go, Balfour! I'll follow . . .

CARLISLE (*entering with many Attendants*).

Car. Me!
 Follow me, Strafford, and be saved! . . . The King?
 (*To the KING.*) Well—as you ordered . . . They are ranged
 without . . .
 The convoy . . . (*seeing the KING's state.*)
 (*To STRAFFORD.*) You know all then! Why, I thought
 It looked so well that Charles should save you—Charles
 Alone . . . 'tis shame that you should owe it me—
 Me . . . no, not shame! Strafford, you'll not feel shame
 At being saved by me?

Hol. All true! Oh, Strafford,
 She saves you! all her deed . . . this girl's own deed.
 —And is the boat in readiness? . . . You, friend,
 Are Billingsley, no doubt! Speak to her, Strafford!
 See how she trembles . . . waiting for your voice!
 The world's to learn its bravest story yet!

Car. Talk afterward! Long nights in France enough
 To sit beneath the vines and talk of home!

Straf. You love me, girl! Ah, Strafford can be loved
 As well as Vane! I could escape, then?

Car. Haste . . .
 Advance the torches, Bryan!

Straf. I will die!
 They call me proud . . . but England had no right
 When she encountered me—her strength to mine—

To find the chosen foo a craven ! Girl,
 I fought her to the utterance—I fell—
 I am hers now . . . and I will die ! Beside
 The lookers-on ! Eliot is all about
 This place with his most uncomplaining brow !

Car. Strafford !

Straf. I think if you could know how much
 I love you, you would be repaid, my girl !

Car. Then, for my sake !

Straf. Even for your sweet sake . . .
 I stay.

Hol. For their sake !

Straf. I bequeath a stain . . .
 Leave me ! Girl, humour me and let me die !
Hol. No way to draw him hence—Carlisle—no way ?

Car. (suddenly to CHARLES) Bid him escape . . . wake,

King ! Bid him escape !

Straf. (Looking earnestly at him.) Yes, I will go ! Die, and
 forsake the King ?

I'll not draw back from the last service.

Car. Strafford !

Straf. And, after all, what is disgrace to me ?
 Let us come, girl ! . . . That it should end this way !
 Lead then . . . but I feel strangely . . . it was not
 To end this way !

Car. Lean—lean on me !

Straf. My King !
 Oh, had he trusted me—his Friend of friends—
 Had he but trusted me !

Car. Leave not the King—
 I can support him, Hollis !

Straf. (Starting as they approach the door at the back.)
 Not this way ;

This gate . . . I dreamed of it . . . this very gate !

Car. It opens on the river—our good boat
 Is moored below—our friends are there !

Straf. The same !
 Only with something ominous and dark,
 Fatal, inevitable . . .

Car. Strafford ! Strafford !

Straf. Not by this gate . . . I feel it will be there !
 I dreamed of it, I tell you . . . touch it not !

Car. To save the King,—Strafford, to save the King !

(As STRAFFORD opens the door, PYM is discovered with HAMPDEN, VANE, etc. STRAFFORD falls back to the front of the stage : PYM follows slowly and confronts him.)

Pym. Have I done well? Speak, England! Whose great sake

I still have laboured for, with disregard
To my own heart,—for whom my youth was made
Barren, my future dark, to offer up
Her sacrifice—this man, this Wentworth here—
That walked in youth with me—loved me it may be,
And whom, for his forsaking England's cause,
I hunted by all means (trusting that she
Would sanctify all means) even to the grave
That yawns for him. And saying this, I feel
No bitter pang than first I felt, the hour
I swore that Wentworth might leave us,—but I
Would never leave him: I do leave him now!
I render up my charge (be witness, God!)
To England who imposed it! I have done
Her bidding—poorly, wrongly—it may be
With ill effects—for I am but a man . . .
Still, I have done my best, my very best,
Not faltering for a moment! I have done!

(After a pause.)

And that said, I will say . . . yes, I will say
I never loved but this man—David not
More Jonathan! Even thus, I love him now:
And look for my chief portion in that world
Where great hearts led astray are turned again,
(Soon it may be . . . and . . . yes . . . it will be soon:
My mission over, I shall not live long!)—
. . . Ay, here I know I talk—and I will talk
Of England—and her great reward—as all
I look for there; but in my inmost heart
Believe I think of stealing quite away
To walk once more with Wentworth—with my friend
Purged from all error, gloriously renewed,
And Eliot shall not blame us! Then indeed . . .
(This is no meeting, Wentworth! Tears rise up
Too hot . . . A thin mist—is it blood?—enwraps
The face I loved so!) Then, shall the meeting be!
Then—then—then—I may kiss that hand, I know!

Straf. (Walks calmly up to Pym and offers his hand.) I have loved England too; we'll meet then, Pym!
As well to die! Youth is the time—our youth,
To think and to decide on a great course:
Age with its action follows; but 'tis dreary
To have to alter one's whole life in age—
The time past, the strength gone! as well die now.
When we meet, Pym, I'd be set right—not now!
I'd die as I have lived . . . too late to change!

Best die. Then if there's any fault, it will
 Be smothered up: much best! You'll be too busy
 Witl your hereafter, you will have achieved
 Too many triumphs to be always dwelling
 Upon my downfall, Pym? Poor little Land
 May dream his dream out of a perfect Church
 In some blind corner? And there's no one left . . .

(*He glances on the KING.*)

I trust the King now wholly to you, Pym!
 And yet . . . I know not! What if with this weakness . . .
 And I shall not be there . . . And he'll betray
 His friends—if he has any . . . And he's false . . .
 And loves the Queen, and . . .

Oh, my fate is nothing—
 Nothing! But not that awful head . . . not that!

Pym, save the King! Pym, save him! Stay—you shall . . .
 For you love England! I, that am dying, think
 What I must see . . . 'tis here . . . all here! My God!
 Let me but gasp out, in one word of fire,
 How Thou wilt plague him, satiating Hell!
 What? England that you love—our land—become
 A green and putrefying charnel, left
 Our children . . . some of us have children, Pym—
 Some who, without that, still must ever wear
 A darkened brow, an over-serious look,
 And never properly be young . . .

No word!

You will not say a word—to me—to Him!

(*Turning to CHARLES.*)

Speak to him . . . as you spoke to me . . . that day!

Nay, I will let you pray to him, my King—

Pray to him! He will kiss your feet, I know!

What if I curse you? Send a strong Curse forth
 Clothed from my heart, lapped round with horror, till
 She's fit, with her white face, to walk the world,
 Scaring kind natures from your cause and you—
 Then to sit down with you, at the board-head,
 The gathering for prayer . . .

Vane.

O speak, Pym! Speak!

Straf. . . . Creep up, and quietly follow each one home—
 You—you—you—be a nestling Care for each
 To sleep with, hardly moaning in his dreams . . .
 She gnaws so quietly . . . until he starts—
 Gets off with half a heart eaten away . . .
 Oh, you shall 'scape with less, if she's my child!

' *Vane (to Pym).* We never thought of this . . . surely not,
dreamed

Of this . . . it never can . . . could come to this !

Pym (after a pause). If England should declare her will to
me . . .

Straf. No—not for England, n^o—not for Heaven, now . . .
See, Pym—for me ! My sake ! I kneel to you !

' There . . . I will thank you for the death . . . my friend,
This is the meeting . . . you will send me proud

To my chill grave ! Dear Pym—I'll love you well !
Save him for me, and let me love you well !

Pym. England—I am thine own ! Dost thou exact
That service ? I obey thee to the end !

Straf. (as he totters out). O God, I shall die first—I shall die
first !

Curtain falls.

